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Now, what? Erap wants to build library in Tanay

By Armand N. Nocum

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

No Presidential Medal of Merit for FPJ, after all

By John Leloy Javellana

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2 bombing suspects fall

2 portraits of Roldan: Sinner or saint

By Norman Bordadora and Christine O. Esguerra

VALENTINE'S DAY bombing suspects Gamal Baharon alias Tapay and Angelo Trinidad alias Abu Khalil Trinidad, a Muslim convert, are presented to the media at Camp Aguinaldo on Tuesday. Authorities claim their investigation revealed that Abu Sayyaf commander Abu Sulaiman allegedly assigned the suspects as the bombing operators in Makati. (PHOTO BY ROY DOMINGO)

Abu bandits identified by bus conductor

By Alexis Pupa and Christine V. Esguerra

No money, no national ID, say lawmakers

By Carlos Conde and Christine O. Avendaño

SWEA SUPL. Norhat (c. 4, sister (2nd from r.) revolutionary Misuari into a guerilla-loving father in his detention camp in Santa Rosa, Laguna. (PHOTO BY ALEXIS PUPA)

Misuari denies ordering men to attack Army

By Marian Ramos
PDI Reporter in Laguna
and Cynthia D. Balana
in Manila

THE ORIGINAL EDSA

Ramboys' book to tell what happened at Edsa

By Michael Lim Ubac

WHERE were the people in "People Power"? The thousands at the Edsa Shrine marching to the People Power Monument were "bottled" by the government. (STORY on Page A6.)

GMA urges Filipinos to fight graft in gov't

By John Leloy Javellana

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers

House stands firm on 12% VAT

By Carlos Pedro

HOUSE members yesterday stood their ground on a 12 percent value-added tax in the face of the senators' rejection of a House bill hiking the VAT rate from the current 10 percent.

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda (Lakas-Kampi), chair of the committee on economic affairs, said the Lower House would insist on the new percentage point. VAT increase, noting that this was the position of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The President insists that we should still go for 12 percent," Salceda said at a press briefing.

Quezon Rep. Eric Singson (LP), the vice chair of the ways and means committee, said the House and the Senate had reached an impasse on the VAT bill as indicated by the conciliation of a scheduled meeting yesterday of the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council.

He said Malacañang had canceled the meeting because the President did not want the Lodge to become a debating ground on the VAT but some senators and congressmen.

"We have not gone into the bicameral level and not even in a deadlock already. The senators are complicating matters," Singson said.

He noted that even the expanse proposed in the VAT exemptions, particularly against the independent power producers, would face tough selling.

The Senate ways and means committee last week said it was inclined to junk the bill proposing to increase the VAT rate to 12 percent and retain the present 10 percent rate, but raised the exemption level to P500,000, set fines, dropping surcharges and cooperatives.

Singson said imposing the VAT on IPPs would result in the impairment of their contracts with the National Power Corp., which violates the 1987 Constitution.

He warned the IPPs would even question the legality of a bill lifting their VAT exemption before the Supreme Court.

But Albay Rep. Luis Villafuerte (Lampi) said the senators' rejection of the 12 percent VAT bill may not represent the final position of the Senate.

Salceda, an economic adviser to the Presidency, said the administration needed to raise P80 billion in tax revenues to solve a budget deficit crisis and was looking at all possible options, including the lifting of VAT exemptions for such entities as oil and power, as well as certain excise tax of tobacco and alcohol products like in corporate income taxes.

"The bottom line is we have to get P80 billion," Salceda said.

He warned the IPPs were now on a proposal to reduce the individual income tax rate by 20 percent and increase corporate taxes to 35 percent.

An income tax cut would shift the tax burden from the middle class to the corporate sector, Salceda said.

LAGIP BUHAY DONATION

Speaker Jose de Venecia turns over the P250,000 donation of the House of Representatives for the Lagip Buhay fund drive of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the Catholic Media Network (CMN) for the orphanage in Tondo, Quezon, run by Francis Lucas of CMN and Inquirer president Sandy Prieto. De Venecia said the House canceled its traditional Christmas party in December to raise funds for the fund-raising. Witnessing the turnover are (left to right) Representatives Juan Cua, Rolando Andaya Jr., Edgar Chatto, Abraham Mitra, Eric Singson, Benigno Aquino III, Ms. Amelita Villarosa, Deputy Speaker Gerry Salapuddin, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Arthur Defensor and Eduardo Zialcita.

The 'Franchise' strikes back

Fernandez files annulment case vs wife, cites 'psychological incapacity'

CEBU CITY—Former basketball player Ramon Fernandez has asked a court here to annul his 20-year marriage to his estranged wife, Marissa, whom he accused of being "psychologically incapable of performing her essential marital obligations."

Fernandez, 54, yesterday filed a declaration of nullity of marriage before the regional trial court here, eight days after Marissa sought for a court protection order from her husband, accusing him of physically abusing her.

Marissa, 47, filed an application for a temporary and permanent protection order against Fernandez under the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act of 2004 or the Magallanes ground to locate on Fernandez's duty.

Fernandez, known in his playing days as "The Franchise" and "El Presidente," yesterday said he did want to comment on the case filed by his wife which he said had taken him by surprise.

"I am willing to answer all the charges in court. I don't want to comment more about the case and throw mud in the public. He cannot live together anymore. I was just waiting for the children to grow up before filing this complaint," he said in a mixture of Filipino and English.

The couple was married on May 21, 1977. He was 26 and she, 19. The union produced four children, ranging in age from 17 to 27.

In his complaint, Fernandez said he would not contest his wife's custody over the children or the disposition of their conjugal properties. He also said he would waive his share of the conjugal assets in favor of his children.

The former basketball star, who is now based in Cebu City, said he left the conjugal home in Alabang in May 2004.

"I am very fine. I'm back in my hometown here," said Fernandez, who runs a basketball clinic here.

"Life is still," he said.

Fernandez ran for a party-list seat in the May 2004 elections but lost.

Fernandez alleged in his complaint that his wife was "psychologically incapable of performing her essential marital obligations."

He claimed the condition already existed before their marriage and became apparent during their 20 years together.

He also alleged that Marissa would wage fights and physically attack him every time they had arguments.

"During their marriage, the defendant exhibited traits showing that she wanted the plaintiff all for herself. She disallowed him from mingling with his friends and even his relatives. She exhibited jealousy to the extreme. Whenever the plaintiff would go to Tacloy or Leyte, she would feign an ailment and request Ramon to rush her to the hospital, the employ subterfuge and ploys to get what she wanted," the complaint stated.

Fernandez attached in his complaint a psychological report prepared by Evelyn Del Mundo of the psychology department of the University of San Carlos here.

Lawyer Alexis Ibañez, one of Fernandez's lawyers, told the Inquirer that his client suffered depression and "had committed a psychological fact mainly."

Ibañez said the psychological report would show that Marissa was suffering from a social disorder known as "psychiatry disorder not otherwise specified."

He said the disorder was chronically diagnosed to be permanent and incurable.

"The basis for filing this complaint is what we say is psychological incapacity to perform essential marital obligations. We have a psychological report that determines the personality disorder suffered by the respondent," the lawyer said. *Julmar A. Balandra, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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A GREAT WAY TO FLY

Air Force officer slain in clash with NPA rebels

An Air Force officer was killed and two other soldiers wounded yesterday as government forces clashed with communist guerrillas in Leyte, Samar, authorities said.

New People's Army guerrillas suffered an undetermined number of casualties in the clash with a joint military-police patrol in Barangay Candoto in Leyte at about 8:45 a.m. yesterday.

The military backed by aircraft, are pursuing the unit of the NPA Isidro and Ramon Diaz Platoon in Dita Montenegro, the provincial police director.

Killed was 1st Lt. Mervin Soriano, a member of the Air Force's 710th Operations Wing. The injured soldiers have yet to be identified.

According to Montenegro, Soriano's group were patrolling a hilly area of Barangay Candoto when they clustered upon some of the guerrillas.

He said he is the chief of the staff of the slain.

During the clearing operations, two NPA made rebels were captured, Montenegro said.

He said there were no reported fatalities on the rebel side but three were hallucinations that many had been wounded.

The clash was the third in a week between the communist insurgents and government troops in Eastern Samar province.

Military reports indicate that about a hundred NPA fighters have testified Barangay from the island of Mindoro island of some 150 Philippine military exercises in the neighboring provinces of Quezon and Laguna.

The NPA earlier warned U.S. troops taking part in annual joint military exercises with Philippine forces that they would be attacked if they stayed into rebel-influenced areas of the country.

Some 800 American and 6,000 Filipino troops began joint training exercises on Leyte Island on Sunday.

However, US Embassy deputy chief of mission Joseph Mussomeli downplayed the warning, saying that while security measures were in place, the NPA statement was largely meaningless.

The 6,000-strong NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, established a terrorist organization by the Philippine and the United States. Marlon Ramos and Mel Magkilat-Lobo, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Alexis Pepa, Melo Medalla and AFP*

Another corporate exec tapped

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is reportedly appointing a top corporate executive to head Clark Development Corp. (CDC) as a final step in her bid to make the former American military bases reach their full potential.

A Malacañang source said Ma Arroyo was seriously considering Jaime Jesus Philippines president Tony Sy to replace CDC president and chief executive officer Emmanuel Angeles who would be retiring on March 16.

Sy is credited for shepherding the growth of Ambos Assam, the world's largest provider of chip packaging and test services. This is Clark, helped the integrated-circuit operations Boards in the Philippines.

When asked to confirm this report, Deutsche treasury Ignacio Bunye replied: "Done medias."

Describing a savvy management personality, a politician to oversee the development of the former American air base was in keeping with the President's decision to put former Ayala Land Inc. president Francisco U. Lacsamana III as head of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) last year in lieu of Roman Santamaria Delarbre Reyneta Jr.

Subic and Clark have generated substantial investments and improvements since the American troops left in the 1990s. But observers said these gains were still far from the full potential expected from the former military bases with their strategic location and wide open space for development.

Fernandez attached in his complaint a psychological report prepared by Evelyn Del Mundo of the psychology department of the University of San Carlos here.

Lawyer Alexis Ibañez, one of Fernandez's lawyers, told the Inquirer that his client suffered depression and "had committed a psychological fact mainly."

Ibañez said the psychological report would show that Marissa was suffering from a social disorder known as "psychiatry disorder not otherwise specified."

He said the disorder was chronically diagnosed to be permanent and incurable.

"The basis for filing this complaint is what we say is psychological incapacity to perform essential marital obligations. We have a psychological report that determines the personality disorder suffered by the respondent," the lawyer said. *Julmar A. Balandra, PDI Visayas Bureau*

HIDDEN PROBLEM

RP sitting on tip of AIDS iceberg

THE PHILIPPINES is sitting on the tip of an HIV/AIDS iceberg and worried health authorities have no idea how big the problem facing the country is, a top official told an international conference here Tuesday.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that the Philippines had 2,200 confirmed cases of HIV and 676 cases of AIDS according to latest figures, but officials feared that the true level of infection could be far higher.

"We in the Philippines are sitting on the tip of an iceberg and we don't know how big the base is," Dayrit told the conference organized by various bodies including the World Health Organization and UNAIDS.

Dayrit said that up to one million prostitutes and an estimated one to two million of their clients were vulnerable to HIV/AIDS but emphasized that the problem was no longer limited to the sex trade.

"It cuts across all boundaries... rich and poor," Dayrit said, saying that the fight against the disease in this Roman Catholic nation needed to be brought out into public domain. "What we need in the Philippines is a public face to the HIV/AIDS fight. Something which will galvanize the nation. Whatever the government says will have little impact."

He said one of the biggest challenges was increasing sex education in schools.

"HIV/AIDS needs to be brought out into the open," he said. "Young people need to be told that they are not invincible and we have to start telling people that they should start taking responsibility for their own sexual behavior."

Dayrit said those most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS include between 500,000 to one million prostitutes; 15.7 million young people between 15 and 24 years of age; an estimated one to two million clients of sex workers, and an estimated 7.6 million overseas Filipino workers.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS has doubled in recent years and has spread beyond sex workers, Dayrit said.

"Although our numbers for HIV/AIDS is small when compared with other countries in the region, there is no room for complacency. My concerns are with the hidden challenges," he said.

Of the cases so far reported in the Philippines, 69 percent were in the 20- to 39-year-old age group and 63 percent were males, according to government data.

The data shows that sexual intercourse remained the leading mode of HIV transmission at 92 percent, with returning overseas Filipino workers accounting for 33 percent of the reported HIV cases.

The WHO and the Department of Health have estimated that at the end of 2003 there were 10,000 Filipinos infected with HIV.

At the end of 2004 the United Nations program on HIV/AIDS estimates that in Asia and the Pacific there were 8.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS. *AFP*

Execs hid plan to buy Napocor chopper–Joker

By Michael Lim Ubac

ENERGY officials deliberately hid the impending purchase of a brand new helicopter worth P336 million to lawmakers during budget deliberations, Sen. Joker Arroyo said yesterday.

Arroyo said the purchase was not included in the budget of the state-owned National Power Corp. and its attached agency, the National Transmission Commission.

He noted that while the bidding had been scheduled for Feb. 4, the Senate wrapped up its deliberations on the Napocor and Transco budget on Feb. 7 not knowing about the helicopter purchase.

Arroyo said this following a privilege speech by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. Monday seeking an inquiry into the purchase.

Magsaysay said the purchase was "patently unconscionable" because government was trying to "sell and privatize (Transco) so that the Philippine government and the Filipino people will be less burdened by such a white elephant."

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. confirmed the item was not in Transco's spending package so it was possible that "corporate funds" would be used to buy the helicopter.

"Although a government-controlled corporation, Transco officials are still liable to Congress on how they disburse their funds," said Villar.

Arroyo said while the proposed 2005 national budget was replete with provisions forbidding the purchase of new vehicles, Transco was "free as a bird" to purchase a brand new, twin-engine helicopter for P336 million.

"The President should rein in her executives in Napocor and Transco in their spending spree because thrift and transparency are anathema to them," said Arroyo.

Arroyo said Transco could not justify the purchase because it already had a fleet of six helicopters and two airplanes it could use anytime: two BK-117, two Bell 206B and two BO-105 helicopters, and one BN-2T Islander and BE-350 King Air planes.

King Air is an executive-type private plane worth $2 to $3 million.

According to Arroyo, Guillermo Redoblado, Transco's vice president for Luzon operations and maintenance and chair of the bid and awards committee, will be made to explain the purchase plan.

But Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said Transco officials should resign immediately.

"If they don't know how to be economical and they are further burdening the people, they have no business staying in government," said Enrile, noting that the fleet of helicopters should be "reconditioned" to save money.

In a paid advertisement which came out in the INQUIRER on Feb. 4, Transco called on suppliers to bid for the supply and delivery of one unit of brand new, multi-role, twin-engine helicopter purportedly to maintain power transmission lines.

Elder Bush makes brief stopover

FORMER United States President George H.W. Bush made a brief refueling stop in Manila early yesterday after wrapping up a tour of tsunami-ravaged nations aimed at raising reconstruction funds, US officials said.

Bush, father of the current US president, toured Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives with another former US leader, Bill Clinton, to encourage more donations for rebuilding efforts across the Indian Ocean that are expected to take years.

"It was a refueling stop, there was no protocol attached to it," US Embassy spokeswoman Karen Kelley said of the brief stopover of Bush, who was on his way home.

The United States deployed a carrier battle group and about 20 helicopters for relief operations off the worst-hit Indonesian province of Banda Aceh's western coast—its biggest military operation in Southeast Asia since the Vietnam War. Washington has pledged $950 million (euro722 million) for relief efforts for tsunami-hit countries.

After touring a devastated village with Clinton near Banda Aceh on Sunday, Bush said: "I've never seen anything like this in my entire life. Ever."

He told local villagers who greeted them that, "You're going to be OK. A lot of people around the world want to help."

The mammoth 9.0-magnitude earthquake and the tsunami that it unleashed killed more than 165,000 people in 11 Indian Ocean nations. Most of the victims were in Indonesia's Aceh province, closest to the epicenter. Tens of thousands are missing and presumed dead. *AP*

Villar airs concern over 2005 budget

SEN. MANUEL Villar Jr. yesterday expressed concern that the House of Representatives may not be keen on passing the proposed 2005 national budget since it has yet to name its representatives to the bicameral conference committee which will reconcile the Senate and House versions of the budget.

If the bicameral committee fails to convene this week, or even today, Villar revealed that this was a signal that the House was not keen on passing the 2005 budget.

"I will see if until (today,) if we still do not have a bicameral conference committee meeting, I will assume that the House has a bad motive," he said yesterday.

But Villar expressed hope that this was not the case because it was not right for Congress to allow government to operate on a reenacted budget for the third consecutive year.

Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee, said he has been waiting since the start of the week for the House panel of the bicameral conference committee to inform them when they could all meet.

Two weeks after the Senate passed its version of the budget bill, the bicameral committee has yet to convene because the House still has to form its own panel, a development that Senators Edgardo Angara and Aquilino Pimentel Jr. earlier viewed with apprehension.

The Senate has already formed its seven-member panel for the budget reconciliation and was thus already ready to face their counterparts in the House.

Villar said the bicameral conference committee should at least meet once this week.

Since the start of the year, the government has been operating on a reenacted 2004 budget after Congress failed to approve the proposed 2005 budget. *Christine O. Avendaño*

SC tells gov't to comment on seniors' drug discount

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has ordered the government to comment on a petition by drugstore owners seeking to strike down a portion of the Expanded Senior Citizens Law that gave elderly people a 20-percent discount from commercial establishments.

In a resolution dated Jan. 25 but released only yesterday, the high court gave the Department of Justice, Health, Finance, Interior and Local Government, and Social Welfare and Development 10 days to comment on the petition.

Five drugstore owners said in a petition filed on Jan. 20 the privilege extended to senior citizens was having small drugstores to increase their prices because the government sets reimbursing only 32 percent of the 20 percent discount they give senior citizens.

Victor Roque, counsel for the petitioners, said drugstore owners were forced to shoulder the discounts because the law "did not provide for a mechanism wherein drugstores will be justly compensated or reasonably reimbursed for the subsidies they have given."

"Effectively, the law in question gave opportunity to the senior citizens, but did so at the expense of the drugstore owners and establishments," he added.

Under the law, drugstores were reimbursed through tax deductions, "but this scheme of [some] flaws is refuted from the Bureau of Internal Revenue only 32 percent of the 20-percent discount, Roque said.

This means that for every P1 discount, drugstore owners lose 68 centavos because only 32 centavos can be reimbursed by the government, according to Roque.

He cited the anti-hypertensive maintenance drug Norvasc, which petitioner Carlos Super Drug bought from distributors at P37.57 per tablet. The drugstore then sells it for P39.60 or a five-percent margin.

With the 20-percent discount, a drugstore sells Norvasc for P31.68, which translates to a loss of P5.89 per tablet. The store would then get only a refund of P2.53 per tablet and not the whole discount of P5.92.

Already, the law has forced drugstores to increase the prices of medicines, particularly branded drugs, to recoup their losses. This in turn, Roque said, had led to poor sales and had virtually rendered the discount scheme ineffective.

"Because these small drugstores are pushed to the wall, so to speak, their pricing strategy has effectively made the prices of medicines prohibitive," Roque said.

Overall, the law seems to be a stepchild thanks to the government's economic threat of propping up the small and medium enterprises. Instead of helping SMEs to boost, the law—as it stands now—the small- to medium-sized drugstores, which are now facing the prospect of an inevitable closure because of heavy losses," he added.

With the situation, the law had also effectively denied the Honorable 6.5 million of the senior citizens in the country the discount.

"Of the five million senior citizens, only 500,000 are in Metro Manila. Regrettably, only half a million senior citizens who have easy access to pharmacy drug, the biggest drugstore chains in the country, will get to enjoy the 20-percent discount," he said.

Roque said Mercury Drug could afford to continue extending the privilege to senior citizens because of its huge discounts it gets for bulk purchase.

"Until the legal issue on the discounts of establishment is properly resolved, their noble intention to help the senior citizens will never be fully realized, and the 20-percent discount on medicines will continue to be just a concept or perhaps, a successful political campaign strategy," Roque said.

Foreign tourists not heeding travel warnings, says Durano

By TJ Burgonio

NEGATIVE travel advisories on the Philippines will not affect tourist arrivals as foreigners do not heed them, Tourism Secretary Ramon Joseph Ace Durano said yesterday.

The United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada had advised their nationals to be "cautious" when traveling in the Philippines following the Feb. 14 bomb attacks, and to skip the country until the country's airports face cases of sporadic clashes between government troops and insurgents.

"Travelers' reminders are very sophisticated. They don't accept these travel advisories hook, line and sinker. They also do the research," Durano added, in response to an interview at the US Embassy.

Tourists from Japan, China and South Korea, the country's prime source markets, are "not sensitive" to these advisories, he said.

"That's why these countries did not even issue travel advisories," Durano added.

He noted that the areas cited in these advisories are off limits to foreigners, and far from the tourist destinations being promoted by his department.

"All the tourist industries and the tourists are in Boracay, Cebu as far Davao—these are destinations. It's for this reason that foreign tourists continue to flock to our beach destinations," Durano said.

To counter such adverse advisories, the tourism department has stepped up its campaign to promote the country as a safe destination, the secretary said

More RP women try suicide, but men are more successful in their attempt

By Nikko Dizon

MORE Filipino women try to commit suicide but the men are more successful in their attempts, a psychiatrist said yesterday.

The trend is mainly attributed to the lethality of the different methods that men and women use, Dr. Gerardo C. Nunag, a psychiatric consultant at the St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC) and at the Child-Jesus's Welfare Specialist Group of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), said in a press conference.

Nunag said that while women opt to take an overdose of medicine or cut their wrists, the men would kill themselves with a gun, through strangulation, by jumping off buildings, or by plunging into vehicular accidents.

"Normally, when the woman feels the pain on her wrist, she would stop the attempt," Nunag explained.

However, in the study she conducted from 1998 to 2000 as a consultant in another private hospital which included more than 130 cases of suicide attempts, she once used drug overdose as a method contrary to the universally accepted mode.

Nunag attributed this to the fact that the private hospital catered to specific clients, or those in the higher economic status.

US envoy not leaving anytime soon

ACCLIVADONE

By TJ Burgonio

U.S. AMBASSADOR Francis Ricciardone has proven to love Manila so much he is not eager to pack his bags and leave "anytime soon."

Ricciardone yesterday laughed off speculations that his tour of duty was about to end following reports that the US state department had nominated Cameron B. Kunzo as the next ambassador to the Philippines.

"I hope not. I love the Philippines. I wish there's such a thing as ambassador for life to the Philippines. We don't have that job in my country," he said when asked by reporters at the US Embassy in Manila about his impending departure.

Ricciardone, named envoy to Manila in February 2002 and now on his fourth year of duty, stressed that a slew of tasks lay ahead of him and needed to be accomplished.

"I wanted my fourth year in this country personally. I want to stay as long as I can ... I'm only concentrating on this job. There's so much to do. I don't expect I'll be leaving anytime immediately," he said.

The ambassador led embassy staff, diplomats, Senators Richard Gordon and Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Mayor Lito Atienza and other officials in simple rites marking the 60th anniversary of the Flag Raising at the American Embassy.

Gov. Douglas MacArthur raised the American flag again on the grounds of the Intramuros High Commission in Manila, where the embassy now stands, even as fierce fighting between American and Japanese forces continued to rage on Feb. 23, 1945.

Nunag, US envoy to South Africa, is being groomed by the state department to succeed Ricciardone. The Senate foreign relations committee, however, has yet to schedule his confirmation hearing, according to reports.

Even while commenting on the state department's public announcement urging its nationals to exercise caution while staying here, Ricciardone continued to heap praises on the Philippines, saying, "It's a fine place to visit" for American tourists.

"We advise Americans that this is a fine place to visit. We take General Eduardo Ermita's words to Filipinos: 'Know what you're doing, know where you go, pay attention' and it's a fine place to be if you do that," he said.

"That's why I bring my families here ... We all bring our families here. We love this place," he added.

Echoing Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli, the ambassador insisted that the state department issued a public announcement, not a travel advisory as had been reported in the local papers.

"Go to our website and read what our Department of State is saying. It's nothing more than what journalist of the facts here," he said. "In fact, Americans are coming here. We do business, it's a fine place for tourists to go."

Church, NGO groups give support to Pinoys in Korea

THE #02,000 and trainees of Filipinos in Korea received a boost yesterday as NGO (non-government organization) and church sectors and Philippine officials met in Seoul and agreed to work more closely and improve the embassy's information on Filipinos living in Korea.

Leaders of the Philippine Women's Association in Korea (Philkor) and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification said they paid a call on Philippine Ambassador Marlo Villacorta to update him on their groups' activities and set up lines of communication.

Rim Young Jun and Yuwak Shin Sook, directors of the Family Federation's Women's Family Department (WFD), told the ambassador Filipino Unification Church in Korea are happily married and that the marriages have a high 99 percent success rate. This is well above the norm for marriages in Korea and elsewhere.

Crowds hauled to attend Edsa 2005 rites

By Ey Zamora

CROWDS hauled by trucks from as far as Cagayan, Pangasinan, dominated the first day of the 19th year celebration of the 1986 People Power at Edsa.

Noticeably missing in the crowd yesterday were former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, former AFP vice chief of staff Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos, Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin and then businessman Bert Ampoin, who made history on Feb. 22, 1986.

The quadrangle fronting the People Power monument just outside Camp Aguinaldo was bordered with balloons, flags and streamers with the face and name of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

A banner by 7 metric tat people of the Presidency's smiling face was set up in front of the stage which made the real Ms Arroyo appear like a dwarf.

Chartered buses and jeepneys lined Edsa from the People Power monument all the way to Santolan Road causing horrendous traffic.

Ating Ganan, 51, and she and her neighbors from Pasay were herded to Edsa at 11 a.m. "They promised to give us money" she said. But at 4 p.m., they were told to go home on their own.

A choral group of college students from Caloocan City, however, were assured of round trip transportation. Most of them had not been born in 1986. What they know of the People Power uprising was based mainly on what they've heard.

"It's like episode of history when the Filipinos regained their freedom from opposition, corruption and martial law," they said, almost in unison.

Their leader, Rodel Aquinque, who is also the secretary general of Kilusang Bayan, said they did not go to Edsa to celebrate "Mindy."

"We are also observing how this administration will perform, particularly in its campaign against graft and corruption," Aquinque told the INQUIRER.

The militant leader said they were not impressed by the administration's campaign and corruption rally marking the 19th year of Edsa 1.

"It's like they're just going through the motions of remembering Edsa. The chosen theme is an dubious since the Arroyo administration is hardly known for fighting graft and corruption. The administration itself has been mired in allegations of graft and corruption and misrule," Bayan secretary general Renato M. Reyes Jr. said in a statement.

2 portraits of Roldan: Sinner or saint

SUSPECT Roldan: So deep in debt that he had to resort to illegal activities?

close with his family as he is still loved by his children," Ongsiako said in an interview.

A different portrait

"He is also loved by his wife. Jiko Inera Bonito so much that she cries when we talk [about his case]," he added.

The Philippine National Police Intelligence chief, Director Nobel Ortiz, drew a different picture.

Ortiz said purported huge losses from different forms of gambling might have pushed Roldan to strike out on another path.

"It appears that he got hooked [on] gambling, particularly cockfighting, losing as much as P300,000," Ortiz told the reporters, citing information he said he and his men had on Roldan's activities. [illegible] on his gadgets in their investigation.

'Superior's idea'

That amount was actually "too small" compared to the heavy losses Roldan allegedly incurred in casinos and basketball game fixing, according to a source interviewed in Roldan's arrest on Saturday.

His losses had supposedly amounted to some P50 million, the source claimed, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"He was so desperate," the source told the INQUIRER.

This was when Danilo Lim Wang, his purported girlfriend, allegedly brought up the idea of kidnapping the 3-year-old son of her close friend.

Girlfriend behind kidnap

Police said the kidnap gang, rounded on Saturday when the boy was rescued, had initially demanded P200 million from the boy's family but lowered the amount later to P3 million.

"It was Superior who hired Dennis Roldan to kidnapping," Ortiz alleged.

Anticrime adviser Dennis Ang-lee said Wang was "very crucial" in Roldan's supposed kidnap-for-ransom activity.

"There's no other way he would know about it [the boy's family being targeted] except from Superior," she said. "All information are came from her."

Evidence against Roldan

Wang, described by Ortiz as the "other mastermind" in the abduction of the boy, is now the subject of a police manhunt.

2 other kidnap cases

Ang-lee said Roldan's name had also cropped up in at least two kidnapping cases. But he was never investigated or charged in either case, she said.

Since nothing came out of those two investigations, Ortiz said, police considered the Feb. 4 kidnapping as Roldan's "first venture" in the lucrative criminal activity.

Ang-lee said authorities had sufficient witnesses to pin down the former aide, as well as evidence that would "stand in court."

"Our proof is 100 percent," said Ang-lee, founder of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, an anticrime watchdog with a network of informants and composed of relatives of former kidnap victims.

Backup car

She claimed police had witnesses present when the kidnappers seized the boy outside his nursery school in Dengas.

During the abduction, Ang-lee alleged, Roldan and Wang were on board a vehicle that served as a back up to the leader/JK, to which the boy was initially dragged after he was abducted.

"Later on, the kidnappers transferred the boy to Roldan's car," she alleged. "He was really involved. The boy saw him and knows."

Just friends, not lovers

Danilo denied that Wang was the former lawmaker's lover.

"They were close friends. But they went in to different fields of business in November," Danilo said.

Danilo said Roldan was not fazed up as his detractors tried to portray him to be, and that he was not desperate.

"He engaged in the buy and sell of cars and construction although he is no longer active in those businesses," Danilo said.

"Concerning him is [some rumors] said he only left it because the latter have not been conducive for such an enterprise," the lawyer added.

Subpoenas out

Regardless of who the man is behind the handsome face, the Department of Justice has ordered Roldan and his co-accused to answer the kidnapping charges against them.

State Prosecutor Nilo Pariscan II said the DOJ had issued subpoenas against Roldan, Wang, and six co-respondents to file their counter affidavits.

The DOJ has scheduled a pre-trial hearing for March 4. With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

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Ramboys' book to tell what ...

Front page, A1

However.

He said the book would be RAM's "offering to the next generation of Filipinos" so "they can make and form their own conclusions about Edsa I without any ideological distortions and biases."

A few brave men

Honasan was candid enough to admit that several quarters continued to doubt RAM's role in Edsa I.

"They come out with flimsy books (and) in public schools branding us as criminals. My children asked me if I'm a criminal and I said, 'No I look like a criminal?' So it's just proper for us to write a book that will tell our children and grandchildren, and the next generation of Filipino leaders, what really happened," said Honasan.

But how will the book treat former President Corazon Aquino—the recognized icon of Edsa I?

Honasan had only this to say: "It was a time of darkness, that a few brave soldiers jumped into the precipice. We didn't know if we would land on anything, or if we would die. We were just looking for a light that would bring about change."

He recalled that he, then Enrile aide Col. Gringo Honrado and a few others were the only ones who knew about the plot to oust Marcos.

"We did not go to Cebu, where Cory was, neither did we go to Malacañang where Marcos was. We simply withdrew our support from the administration and stayed in the middle—in Camp Crame and Aguinaldo," said Honasan.

He said Aquino was in Cebu at the height of the revolution.

"I never saw her in Edsa. I saw Ramos, Enrile. I saw a sea of nameless people who ran no more chance or remain anonymous. All they wanted was change for the better," he said.

"When we looked, there was a flickering light. Then everyone followed suit because there was this light. Many started to claim credit. We (RAM) did not make any noise so long as there was change and reform," he added.

After Edsa, RAM soldiers quietly returned to their original assignments "without asking for promotions and juicy assignments. We returned. Some unexpectedly, hoping that the changes the Filipino people had dreamed of would come to pass."

Honasan described Edsa I as not "purely" against Marcos.

In the middle

"That's the easiest thing to do. But for you to say 'I'm for change, I'm for good governance,' that's a more solid foundation for reforms," he said, lamenting that since 1986, RAM had been attacked from all sides.

"All of a sudden, they started distorting history. Each one was trying to outdo the other in grabbing credit," said Honasan, who became a renegade soldier during the Aquino administration and led seven failed coup attempts.

He said the difference between Edsa I and II lay in the role played by the military.

"The defining character of '86 was that the military stayed in the middle. In Edsa II, the military went to Ambeth Ocampo (where the Edsa shrine is situated)," said Honasan.

But the management, he said, was not exactly

Dreams

"I call for unity. As a former legislator, I'm trying to help organize a strong legal opposition. Let's galvanize bipartisan support so we can guarantee support for worthy programs to respond to the dreams of Edsa I," he insisted, "the valid and noble aspirations that are embodied so clearly in Edsa I."

Now, what? Erap wants to build library in Tanay

Front page, A1

dential and library building" on his 15-hectare vacation resort.

"What will he ask for next?" wondered a special prosecutor.

In a comment submitted to the Sandiganbayan, acting Deputy Special Prosecutor Humphrey T. Bhoometee said that if Jacky Ejercito-Lopez were allowed to build a house and library on the Estrada property in Tanay, Rizal, it would be like granting the former president his original bid for house arrest in San Juan.

"Lest we forget, Estrada is a detention prisoner enjoying privileges that are unavailable to all other detention prisoners — ... This is simply brazen arrogance—but in reverse," he said.

Thus, he asked the court to deny the request "to build a residence and library in the Tanay property which Estrada intends to confiscate thereon."

Estrada, who is facing plunder and perjury charges, was brought from Camp Capinpin in the rest house last year with the full support of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who said the Espinos in a dictator that she wanted the fallen leader treated with dignity.

But Bhoometee said such "unconditional arrangement" not only violated the "equal protection" right of all prisoners, it also presented security problems for Estrada and his guards.

He explained that the "Tanay rest house was never built as, or intended to be, a detention facility. Hence, adequate security is a concern requiring resources."

Bhoometee also pointed out the "dire, the disorder" which would result from the entry of construction workers or "persons posing as such," and the hauling of materials and equipment to and from the Estrada rest house.

"Surely the security personnel can be overwhelmed, overempowered," he said, adding that if Estrada agreed to return to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Camp Capinpin, then "they can build wherever they want in the Tanay property."

'Very biased' reporting

Also yesterday, Estrada called up the Inquirer, complaining about its alleged "very biased" reporting on the testimony of Benito Reyes, an assistant professor of the University of the Philippines and acting treasurer of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation (EMYF).

Reyes testified that Estrada's lawyer Edward Serapio, who was also a foundation board member, kept secret the itinerary of donors who donated P200 million in 2000, which backed the completion of promises that the EMYF was indeed used as founder "parking" money.

Estrada denied this, saying that the foundation was created for a noble purpose, such as the education of tight and deserving Muslim scholars.

"Everything was done in good faith," he said, adding that the foundation's bylaws even state that should the foundation be dissolved, its funds will go to the government or other legitimate beneficiaries.

GMA urges Filipinos to fight graft in gov't

Front page, A1

freedom from corruption," said Ms Arroyo, who delivered her speech entirely in Filipino.

Ms Arroyo said a new constitution was necessary to halt the scourge of graft and corruption.

"During Edsa I, we fought against the dictatorship and corruption. At Edsa One, the dictatorship is gone but we fought against corruption. Now (as celebrating the anniversary of) Edsa Dos (2001), let us strengthen our unity and our leadership as right and action corruption," she said.

Charge illegal loggers

The President vowed to use the powers of the presidency to punish corrupt officials.

"I will use the full weight of the presidency to charge illegal loggers, wobbly transactions of foreign companies with the governments, erring government officials and rumors the honorable and honest service of our soldiers and officers of the Armed Forces who are laying down their lives for our country," the President said.

She said the culture of corruption had been impeding progress. But the Filipino people have led to the filing of cases against many corrupt officials, according to the President.

"The government will move to seize their illegal wealth even before they are cited and sentenced," Ms Arroyo said.

She called on Congress, the private sector and nongovernment organizations to join her in her crusade.

Unbridled power of people

"It was (also) the power of the people, we will realize the strength of Edsa," she said.

"Let us remain that the spirit of Edsa will never die, evident forever in history and the hearts of every Filipino. Let us fight with all our might the scourge of graft that spares poverty and impedes development for the poor. The march of Edsa is not yet over," she said.

Ms Arroyo said that to restore hope in the people and bring about change, her administration would exercise political will to generate jobs, boost the welfare of government, finance pro-poor programs, attract foreign investments and capital, eradicate kidnapping and punish illegal logging.

Busloads of employees

The President attended a meeting with Cabinet officials and legislators to attend the "anti-corruption rally" at the Edsa Shrine while busloads of Malacañang employees were sent to join other government employees mobilized for the affair.

Malacañang's Office of Administration asked different government agencies to send their employees to attend the rally on the eve of the 1986 Edsa People Power Revolution.

The anti-corruption rally was organized as one of the "highlights" of the celebrations of the 19th anniversary of the peaceful uprising that toppled the Marcos dictatorship.

Mr Arroyo, who replaced President Joseph Estrada during the second Edsa people power in 2001, has declared Feb. 25, this day a special national holiday in commemoration Edsa I.

Presidential Adviser on External Affairs Ed Pangilinan expects the rally to draw a crowd of 1 million people.

Pangilinan said that to ensure that the rally will be peaceful, the Philippine National Police (PNP) will deploy 5,000 police officers to secure the area.

Presidential Adviser on Political

'They asked if they could pray [in my house]'

By Lizgo A. del Puerto

VIERAS before the Valentine's Day bombing of a passenger bus in Makati, two men living in a poor Mandaluyong community asked a nervous neighbor if their could rent a room in her home to pray.

They told her their room was locked and they did not have the key. She let them in.

"They asked if they could pray [in my house]. They looked decent," said said tomato vendor Tony Plana told the Inquirer, recounting her brief encounter with the pair.

Late on Monday and yesterday, the country's anti-terrorism Task Force rounded closer on the suspected and self-confessed bombers.

Little did Tony Mesa realize that the two men who rented her house to hold their prayers were the alleged bombers who killed four people and wounded more than 100 others in the July 14 attack.

The Mesa had just arrived from the market when she saw her neighborhood crawling with security agents.

"We were surprised to see so many armed men here," she said.

Cramped room

Residents poured out of their houses to speak at the task force members who had surrounded the area.

The room the suspects had used as safe house measured only 3x3 meters, according to residents.

Many people were not allowed to get inside. Some who found excuses had wanted to ask how members discovered bomb-making officers to locate up the place.

Afterwards report showed the inventor copy of the calling house's hand.

Fruits of the raid

They included a hand grenade, three boxes of blasting caps, five boxes of .45 mm ammunition, 52 feet of time fuse, two small clocks, several small batteries, and weapons, 45 C-4 (enforced in two toothpaste tubes, within containers, and a box of plastic bottle.

The raiders also recovered several SIM packs, and a cell phone charger, according to officers on the ground.

The list also included two maps, one of the Philippines and the other of Metro Manila, and two "books of Islam," one officer said.

Tere and Ken

The room the two men rented could only be reached through an open, winding paths that twisted like a snake connected to a house. The area had several exit points.

A neighbor said the two men seemed to be like people who previous who asked their own business.

They were known in the area as "Tere" and "Ken."

Lifted Banana car

The video of the suspects frequently left the house. His companion nearly stayed inside the room, according to this neighbor.

They would come here almost every day to buy banana ice," the neighbor said.

A barangay watchman told the inquirer that the two rented the house two last year.

"They looked decent, they never bothered anyone. They mostly kept to themselves," said the sari-sari store owner.

2 bombing suspects fall

Story on page A-2

cause of the E here since the two were first romance," Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan told reporters.

A Muslim convert

Gamal Baharom, alias Topoy and Angelo Trinidad, alias Abu Khalil Trinidad, 28, a Muslim convert, were arrested in separate operations in Mandaluyong City and Taguig.

Metro Manila police chief Director Avelino Razon said Baharom was nabbed on Monday at around 11:40 p.m. in front of a 7-11 convenience store at the corner of Boni Avenue and Aglipay Street in Mandaluyong.

Trinidad was arrested yesterday at around 4:30 a.m. along N. Bonifacio Street in San Juan.

The military gave a different version. It said the two were arrested in a squatters area in Mandaluyong.

Authorities recovered half a pound of C4 plastic explosives inside two Iquiano tubes and fifty cartridges, a .45 cal. pistol and ammunition from the suspects' safehouse along Aglipay Street, Razon said.

Bus conductor

The method informant, identified by officials as the conductor of the bombed BICE bus, had told investigators the pair were the two people who got off from the bus before it exploded.

The officers, serving a handful say, said Trinidad sat behind the driver while Baharom took a seat at the rear.

The bus conductor was himself injured in the right leg as a result of the blast.

Bombers' movements

Adan said the suspects boarded the bus at the intersection of Ayala Avenue and Edsa, boarded another bus for Lawton.

Shortly after, Trinidad used his cell phone to detonate the bomb, Adan said.

Investigation also learned that the suspects made frequent use of TNT which they had received from a certain Hakim, alias Negro, in a gasoline station in Taguig City.

Khalil assembled the bomb with timers and a Philtel 8210 cell phone that was used as a triggering device," Adan said.

Another suspect, identified as Ali Imam Maidan, who had slipped out of a police dragnet.

The investigations of the two suspects also revealed that they were ordered by the Jemaah commander Ismael Jidi, alias Abu Jandal, to carry out the bombing.

A man who identified himself as Sobiman had also two radio after the attacks to claim Abu Sayyaf responsibility for the bombings in Makati, Davao and General Santos.

A total of eight people were killed and more than 130 others wounded in the bombings.

Adan said the suspect had undergone training in demolition and explosives from a Jemaah Islamiyah operative, identified only as a certain Jaddat or Zulq, in Mt. Kanuto in Lanao del Sur.

Adan said that Baharom left Cebu for Mindanao for Zamboanga City in 2000 after being implicated in the April 2000 Manila bombings incidents.

Meeting with Janjalani

While in Zamboanga City, Baharom first met Abdurazo Asare then in 2000, Baharom was told by Soliaman to go to Basilan, Lanao del Sur, where he met ASG leader Khaddafy Janjalani. Soliaman, Trinidad and Jaddat, informed.

By the military's account, the two suspects arrived in Manila in September last year.

Soon after, Soliaman sent P30,000 to a Landbank ATM account owned by Baharom for their expenses. In February, the two were ordered to carry out the bombing, Adan said.

Also bombed Gen. San?

"Intelligence reports that have been gathered so far revealed that the group of Janjalani, the Soliaman and Jaddat unit also responsible for the bombing of the bus terminal in Gen. San City, in the same day," Adan said.

"[They] could have perpetrated the same terrorist attack in General Santos City."

Razon said the military and police were keeping a watch on two other suspects based on information provided by Pumeches.

He also said that one Jocelyn Velasco was taken into custody on Sunday, based on Pumeches's information, but "Velasco, a resident of Caloocan City, was released the following day when the bus conductor failed to point him out as one of the passengers.

The Valentine's Day bombings occurred nearly a year after a bomb exploded inside SuperFerry 14 off Manila Bay, killing more than 100 people.

After that bombing, security forces launched a manhunt for other alleged terrorists whom they said had smuggled into Metro Manila.

Razon said that information leading to the arrest of the two suspects was independent from that provided by a police witness named "Francisco."

Coordinated effort

A senior police intelligence officer said the Feb. 14 bombings were a "coordinated effort" involving the Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf, and the "Misuari Breakaway Group."

These groups carried out the plan to bomb key targets in Metro Manila following the military's recent offensive in the Lipa-area stash, a Moro Islamic Liberation Front territory in Mindanao, which is believed to be a hideout of Janjalani.

"The plan was hatched last year and the incident in Lipa area signalled the implementation of the terrorist plot," the official told the Inquirer.

The military had planned to have killed crime-wit terrorists, including four Al operatives, during the attack.

Last straw

The "last straw" was the military offensive against followers of jailed Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, the official said.

"Those were all the handiwork of the Janjalani, Misuari's sons and the JI, which coordinated the whole effort," the official said.

GMA happy

President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed elation over the arrest of the two suspected bombers.

"Of course, the President is happy that in just one week we have already arrested the and caught the bombers," said Executive Secretary Edwin de Ocampo.

"She only claims that there is only among the Filipinos because the information they provided [helped the investigators immensely] to identify who they are and where they are," Romita said. "That is why they were apprehended so quickly." With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

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Editor Lawrence B. Casco

Syria to pull out troops from Lebanon soon

BEIRUT—Syria indicated it would start withdrawing some of its troops from Lebanon soon, but US President George W. Bush insisted it should "end its occupation" of its neighbor.

International and Lebanese pressure have mounted on Syria since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in Beirut a week ago, blamed by Lebanon's opposition on Syria.

Thousands of Lebanese demonstrated in Beirut on Monday calling for the government to resign and Syria to pull out its 14,000 troops from Lebanon, while the United States and France piled up international pressure on Damascus.

Bush, in a speech at the start of a trip to Europe, branded Syria as "oppressive neighbor" to Lebanon and insisted Damascus must "end its occupation."

Arab League chief Amr Moussa said President Bashar al-Assad had told him Syria would soon take steps toward withdrawing its forces in line with the Taif agreement, which ended Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war.

"President Bashar al-Assad assured (me) (that) once (a joint) talks (on) firm intention to press ahead with the implementation of the Taif agreement and to plan a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in line with this agreement," he told reporters after meeting Assad in Damascus.

"The issue of Taif and (is) he with drawal is... part of Syrian policy. There will be talk and steps that we will see soon," Moussa said.

The 1989 Taif agreement committed Syria to shifting its troops in Lebanon to the eastern Bekaa Valley. It also stipulated that Syria and Lebanon should agree a timetable for a complete Syrian pullout. That is yet to be agreed.

Syria, which has 14,000 troops in Lebanon, pulled out or redeployed a few thousand troops last year. It was widely expected to pull out some more troops ahead of a general election in Lebanon, due to take place by May.

"But as the Syrian regime must take stronger action to stop those who support violence and subversion in Iraq and must end its support for terrorist groups working to destroy the hope of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, Syria must also end its occupation of Lebanon," Bush said in a speech in Belgium.

"Our shared commitment to democratic progress is being tested in Lebanon, a once-thriving country that now cowers under the influence of an oppressive neighbor," he said at the start of a trip to meet European Union and NATO leaders.

Saad Hariroff, associate professor of political science at the Lebanese American University, said Bush's comments were part of the pressure on Syria to implement last year's UN Security Council resolution calling for it to quit Lebanon.

"I'm sure every message will be sent at the Munich summit, but the Syrians don't feel this is the right time to make a 180 degree turn in their policy," Hariroff said.

Lebanon's pound was stable on Monday but the central bank continued to sell dollars until worries over the death of Hariri, credited with masterminding Lebanon's reconstruction effort... Reuters

RELIGIOUS DANCE
Masked (black-clad) dancers during Cham Dances in front of the main hall at the Labrang Monastery on the second day of the Monlam (Great Prayer) Festival in Xiahe on the remote fringes of the Tibetan plateau in western China's Gansu province. AFP

Strong quake hits Iran; 400 dead

TEHRAN—A strong earthquake hit northeast Iran on Tuesday, killing almost 400 people, injuring hundreds and destroying entire villages, a local official said.

The early morning quake, which measured 6.4 on the Richter scale, also injured more than 1,000 people and was centered on the town of Zarand in Kerman province, about 770 km southeast of Tehran.

The tremor came just over a year after a devastating earthquake in Bam, about 250 km southeast of Zarand, in which some 31,000 people were killed in December 2003.

While villagers were scared by Tuesday's quake, major towns and cities in the area appeared to have escaped heavy damage, officials said. This means that the toll would not be as high as the many thousands killed in some similar quakes in the past.

"Figures we have about the (city) early hours (are) that 1,000 were injured and almost 400 killed," said Ali Akbarnasr, a spokesperson for the Kerman provincial governor's office.

Zarand Gov. Javad Barkhi said the death toll stood at 350. "But there is a possibility for the figure to rise to 900," he told the semi-official ISNA academic news agency.

Mohammad Ali Imani, governor of Kerman province, said the area affected by the earthquake contained a population of about 20,000 people in some 40 villages which had received structural damage ranging from 20 to 90 percent... Reuters

Bush warns Russia for curbing reforms

BRUSSELS—US President George W. Bush scolded Russia for backsliding on democracy Monday and urged Moscow's allies to take difficult steps for peace, appealing for Europe's help in both troubled areas in "not history on a hopeful course."

Bush opened his discussions with a gesture of reconciliation toward disgruntled allies, hosting an elegant dinner for French President Jacques Chirac, the harshest critic of the US invasion of Iraq.

Three days before seeing Vladimir Putin in Slovakia, Bush admonished the Russian leader in "issues of commitment to democracy and the rule of law." Putin has raised alarms in the West by consolidating power, rolling back democratic reforms and curbing press and political freedoms.

Bush said the United States and all European countries "should place democratic reforms at the heart of their dialogue with Russia." The president suggested that Moscow's entry in the World Trade Organization could hinge on whether it changes course.

"I've got a good relationship with Vladimir; I intend to keep it that way," Bush told reporters during a photo opportunity with Chirac. "But as well, I intend to remind him that it's his interests he likes, that we share values ... and those values are important." AP

Palestinians in political crisis over new Cabinet

RAMALLAH—Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was deep in political crisis on Tuesday over the inclusion of members of former Arafat's corruption-tainted "old guard" in a new Cabinet up for approval by a reform-minded legislature.

Lawmakers from Abbas's Fatah faction threatened to vote no confidence in the government, a move that would force Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie from office, unless changes were made in the cabinet line-up before parliament met later in the day.

Abbas and pro-reform legislators have been trying to persuade Qurie to drop some Arafat loyalists seeking to oust Palestinian security chiefs more non-Fatah figures in the government, especially technocrats who can help it run smoother.

"Fresh members of the legislature will most likely have parliamentary experience. If they don't receive this change, they will pressure such existing no-confidence in this Abu Ala'[Qurie]," a legislator from the faction said.

Negotiations Affairs Minister Saeb Erekat described the situation as difficult but said: "That is what democracy is all about."

Abbas, who would be under no obligation to leave office if Qurie does, is under pressure from the United States and other international donors to wrest order and purging security forces and fight corruption.

"I hope he will enter the movement," US President George W. Bush said in a speech in Missouri on Tuesday during a three-country trip visit to Europe.

Many foreign ministers are gathering in London on March 1 to help draw up a Binational assistance plan for the Palestinians as, successors toward a possible Middle East peace settlement advances following Arafat's death in November.

"Reform is part of dialogue," prepare and we are committed to this policy," Nabil Abu Rdainah, a Palestinian Authority spokesperson, said of Bush's remarks.

Prospects for peacemaking have brightened since Abbas succeeded Arafat on a platform of non-violence and persuaded militants to abide by a de facto truce.

In a gesture both gestures to Abbas, Israel freed 900 Palestinian prisoners on Monday in the largest release for nearly a decade.

But the mood of celebration was tempered by Palestinian demands for even larger prisoner releases to help Abbas get armed groups to formalize the ceasefire he reached with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at a summit in Egypt on Feb. 8.

Israel will hold about 6,000 prisoners and says it will free 400 after a joint committee with the Palestinians finalizes a route.

Abbas turned to make winning Jerusalem for all called Fatah to issue the "top of our priorities," but Israel has refused to release prisoners "with blood on their hands."

The tiredness were heard a day after Sharon's Cabinet approved a pullout from the Gaza Strip, the first time Israel has decided to dismantle settlements on land Palestinians want for a state.

Palestinians welcomed the Gaza withdrawal, slated to begin on July 20, but were angry at Israel's simultaneous decision to endorse a route for a barrier keeping deep on the West Bank to take in major settlement blocs near Jerusalem.

Israel says the barrier stops outside Palestinian communities and is an attempt to grab land they want for a state.

Reuters

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday February 23, 2005
2nd Week of Lent

1st Reading: Jer 18:18-20
Gospel: Matthew 20:17-28

When Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he took the twelve aside and on the way he said, "See, we are going to Jerusalem. There the Son of Man will be given over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law who will condemn him to death. They will hand him over to the foreigners who will mock him, scourge him and crucify him. But he will be raised to life on the third day."

Then the mother of James and John came to Jesus with her sons, and she knelt down to ask a favor. Jesus said to her, "What do you want?" And she answered, "Have one son, my two sons, sit one at your right and one at your left, when you are in your kingdom."

Jesus said to the brothers, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They answered, "We can." Jesus replied, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right or at my left is not for me to grant. That will be for those for whom my Father has prepared it."

The other ten heard all this and were angry with the two brothers. Then Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the nations are in control, and the powerful oppress them. It shall not be so among you; whoever wants to be great in relation to your group shall make himself your servant. And if you want to be first, make yourself the servant of all. In like fashion the Son of Man who has come, not to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom many."

Commentary:

The fight against terrorism, the religious people who dare to mention of burning to undertaking the World Series by month, and terrorists cops are both for justice and concern because that he stood before God and spoke on which behalf? In what are the 2 hearts now? And Jesus rose to tell his disciples that he will be arrested, tortured, and crucified, yet on the 3rd he ignore him, but James and John send their mother in to ask for the best seats in the kingdom come. Jesus asks them if they can drink from his cup of suffering and learn the baptism of death and resurrection. They will. But they also portray Jesus' intention to share in his suffering and death, so as to share in his glory and by extend. there is to be like him. But the world still wants only and give their lives to one son for many. Lord, you invite us daily to take up our crosses and to follow you. You ask us to share in your sufferings, to serve you and your needs, give our lives as ransom. Help us to share your pain, your way of the cross and your dedication to God and care for others instead of all, away thinking of ourselves first. Amen.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW: CIVIL PROCEDURE—Certiorari will issue only to correct errors of jurisdiction. In a petition for certiorari, the jurisdiction of the court is narrow in scope. It is limited to resolving only errors of jurisdiction. It is not to stop at will and resolve questions or issues beyond its competence such as errors of judgment. Errors of judgment of the trial court's are to be reviewed by the appellate court in the appeal or via a petition for review as contemplated in the Court under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court. Certiorari will issue only to correct errors of jurisdiction. It is not serve only to correct errors of judgment. An error of judgment is one in which the court may commit in the exercise of its jurisdiction, and which error is correctible only by an appeal. So long as the court acts within its jurisdiction, any alleged errors committed in the exercise of its discretion will amount to nothing more than mere errors of judgment, correctible by an appeal or a petition for review under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court. An error of jurisdiction is one where the act complained of was issued by the court without or in excess of jurisdiction and which error is correctible only by the extraordinary writ of certiorari. (Limbaroc-Sandoval [Justice Callejo, Sr., Second Division, Gregorio vs Sandiganbayan, G. R. No. 152214, November 11, 2004)

By B. B. Vitto

AWARD-WINNING PHOTO
US Marines of the 28th Regiment, 5th Division, raise the American flag atop Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima, Japan, in this Feb. 23, 1945 file photo. A dwindling group of American survivors gathered this weekend, 60 years later, to commemorate the battle of Iwo Jima.

Avalanches, extreme cold kill 168 in India's Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India—Avalanches and extreme cold in India's province of Kashmir have killed 168 people and left at least 232 others missing, and the Himalayan region remained cut off from the rest of the country Tuesday for the fourth straight day.

Police and soldiers pulled the bodies of 18 people from their homes Tuesday after an avalanche swept through a village in India's Jammu-Kashmir state, an officer on duty at police headquarters in Kashmir said.

At least 12 other people were missing in Kupwara in the border Doda district, 198 km north of Jammu, the winter capital of the state, the officer said on customary condition of anonymity.

Across the state in Srinagar, rescuers were digging out the bodies of four colleagues who had been asphyxiated after they left a cold fire burning to their rooms to keep warm as they slept.

"Their dead bodies were found by colleagues who came to see it in the morning," said Ali Mohammad, a police officer in Srinagar.

Heavy snow and late temperatures have gripped the Kashmir valley since last week. Avalanches and road slides triggered by rain and snow have buried entire villages and collapsed homes across the state.

An army rescue team rescued the people in the extreme village of Shivapora after trekking through hip-deep snow for more than 10 hours Monday. They were searching for more survivors, an army spokesman said Tuesday.

"The team has communicated that most of the houses are under 4.5 to 5.5 meters of snow and chances of finding survivors are very less," said Lt. Col. Jit. Barua.

Three army helicopters were to begin dropping food packets and blankets in the area for rescue workers to distribute to stranded villagers, he said.

The weather office said the cold spell was expected to continue. AP

Unicef UK says one in 12 children exploited at work

LONDON...One child in 12 is forced into the "worst forms" of labor, including slavery, the sex trade and hazardous and illicit activities, the British branch of the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) said in a report released Monday.

Unicef UK said that 300 million children aged five to 17 worked, and that 180 million of them were "involved in the worst forms of child labor—hazardous work, slavery, forced labor, armed forces, commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities."

Fully 47 percent of those were cases of child labor take place in developing countries, it said, meaning that the fight against poverty was the best means to improve the plight of children.

"One way to put an end to the exploitation of children... is by taking action to make poverty history and ensuring a commitment to more and better investment," said Unicef UK executive director Richard Kramer.

The report said that in the 41 countries where annual income are $500 or less per person, between 30 and 50 percent of children are unable to attend school, while in countries where average income rises to $649-1,000 the percentage of child labor drops to between 10 and 30 percent.

"They form a vicious circle, poverty giving rise to labor and labor perpetuating poverty," the report said.

Unicef UK lauded the pledge of developed countries, made more than 30 years ago, of allocating 0.7 percent of gross domestic product to development aid but regretted that only five countries today fulfill that promise—Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden. AFP

Australia to send more troops to Iraq

CANBERRA—Australia will send 450 more troops to southern Iraq to help protect Japanese engineers and bolster democracy, Prime Minister John Howard announced Tuesday, going back on a pledge not to significantly boost his country's contribution to the coalition.

Australia, a staunch US ally, sent 2,000 troops to take part in the invasion of Iraq and still has nearly 900 troops in and around the country. The decision to join the invasion sparked the biggest protests in Australia since the Vietnam War.

"This has not been, is not and will not be an easy decision for the government. I know it will be unpopular with many," Howard said. The Australian troops will replace Dutch soldiers who had been serving in the al-Muthana province of southern Iraq but are scheduled to pull out by mid-March.

"I believe this is the right decision," Howard added, "it will make a significant contribution to the rebuilding of Iraq."

The opposition Labor Party accused Howard of misleading Australians ahead of his October reelection by saying the government had no plans for a dramatic increase in troops. Labor had pledged to withdraw troops by Christmas.

"We (the Labor Party) have said that as far as Iraq is concerned, we intend to be differently engaged, but more deeply engaged," Howard said.

Howard said after visiting Baghdad last April that Australia halted the capacity to increase its commitment by hundreds of troops. "I can definitely say we would be adding hundreds; I can definitely say that we're not going to have a capacity to put more regular soldiers on the ground," Howard said at the time.

Howard said he made the decision to send more troops to Iraq following phone calls from Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. British forces are responsible for security in the region.

"The evolution of the election and process is hopeful," Japan's Foreign Ministry Yoshitaka Shichimura said in a statement. "It encourages the international community that has been working efforts to rebuild Iraq." AP

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Battle vs deadly bird flu far from won, UN says

HO CHI MINH CITY – Bird flu experts from around Asia were gathering in Vietnam on Tuesday to figure out how to kill off a virus one leading American expert has called the world's biggest threat to human health.

"At the moment, we are not on top of it," said Hans Wagner of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization as he prepared for a two-day conference in Vietnam, the country worst hit by a virus which has killed 46 people since it surfaced in Asia in late 2003.

"Definitely we have made progress, but there is much to be done," he said in Ho Chi Minh City, home to 10 million people and close to the Mekong Delta where Vietnam's latest outbreak began.

The H5N1 virus, which experts in Asia say thrives best in the cool season now starting to an end, spread to half Vietnam's 64 provinces and cities, killed 14 people and forced the government to take drastic measures to contain it.

The new outbreak a year after the highly contagious virus arrived in Asia, probably brought by migrating wildfowl, has hardened fears that it could mutate into a form which could spread through a world population with no immunity to it.

Such an influenza pandemic, like the one in 1918 which killed between 20 million and 40 million people, could be devastating.

There is not yet any vaccine against the H5N1 virus.

"This is a very serious situation for the globe," Dr. John Cardwell, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, said on Monday.

"I think we can all anticipate a similar pandemic probably somewhat prior to 1918," she said.

The virus now is far "more dangerous than we are facing right now," he briefing added.

Governments in Asia, where tens of millions of poultry have been slaughtered in a vain bid to eliminate the virus, were hard at work on the problem, the FAO's Wagner said.

Surveillance systems were in place. Information had been upgraded so as the necessary testing and warnings to the public are in touch with a Malaysian contemporaries he said.

"Every country is fully aware of the threat and the global threat, but the work has to be tailored," he said.

"There is not much to be learned about the virus, which has killed more than 70 percent of the people known to have contracted it.

Nobody knows how many people may have been injured in the virus but not because ill.

Just last week, an international team of doctors said the H5N1 virus can produce encephalitis, diarrhea and other symptoms which do not look like the classic respiratory disease.

Meanwhile, farmers dependent on chickens in countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, which are also suffering from recurrences of the virus, are struggling to make a living.

Do Van Hoa, a 30-year-old chicken farmer in the Mekong Delta province of Long An, lost 14,000 chickens last year.

The government gave him 5,000 dong ($0.31) apiece in compensation. This year, it has doubled this. The problem is, he explains it costs him 10,000 dong to raise a bird.

And he has had to learn to live with chickens more or keep them away from wild birds and spray their compounds with disinfectant three times a day.

"I'm afraid them within us an outbreak on a nearby farm and the government will slaughter all poultry in the area," he said with an eye on a farm I. her many ducking ducks, which, like their wild relatives, can carry the virus without showing symptoms. Reuters

Writer who exposed Iraq prison abuse wins journalism award

NEW YORK – Seymour Hersh of The New Yorker won his fifth George Polk Award for his accounts of prisoner abuse in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, making him the most honored individual in the history of the awards.

Reporters from The New York Times took three of the 2004 awards, and The Associated Press won a double winner.

Hersh won the magazine reporting prize for his Abu Ghraib stories 30 years after winning the Polk award for coverage of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam.

The Career Award went to Bill Moyers, who retired last year after more than three decades in public television. He won a Polk Award in 1969 for political reporting.

The 11 awards were to be announced Monday by Long Island University, which won to present the prizes April 21. They were created in 1949 in honor of the CBS reporter killed while covering the Greek civil war and rank among America's most coveted journalism honors.

Dexter Filkins of The New York Times won in the war reporting category for his firsthand accounts of attacks against Iraqi insurgents in Fallujia. Rick Bragg, another of the Times won the international reporting category for Haiti. Polk award, for his series on how railroad companies were able to sidestep regulations. Eli Lake Hentoff won the paper's third award for 2004 for military reporting. His work looked at how taxpayers and investment firms with ties to military contractors took advantage of young soldiers.

The Associated Press' Maggy Ezeila won the award for foreign reporting. She was cited for her work in Haiti, covering the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and then the aftermath of floods that devastated the country. She a were the news organization's chief of bureau in London. Justin Pritchard, the AP's news editor for Southern California, won the labor reporting prize for his investigation into the high rate of work-related deaths among Mexican workers in America. Pritchard's report, done in concert with federal data and numerous interviews, drew responses from the Mexican and US governments, including the first response Safety and Health Secretary Mel Foy the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. AP

Egyptian infant with second head in stable condition

CAIRO – A 10-month-old girl was in stable condition Monday but still being carefully monitored for complications following lengthy surgery last week to remove a second head that shared oblivion wound with her own brain.

Mariar Magdi, her head wrapped in a heavy white bandage that also covered her eyes, rested next to a blue teddy bear in the intensive care unit of Ibrahim Hospital. Below rose from her nose and mouth and tubes hooked around her.

Dr. Abla al-Alfi, senior neurosurgeon at the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit, said there has been "some stabilization" since the surgery on the child last week.

She said Mariar had already been taken off medication to control post-surgery convulsions but other concerns remained, including the baby's face, which had not "developed normally since the surgery. "She needs intensive treatment for every case," al-Alfi said.

Al-Alfi said they could not evaluate the extent of Mariar's nervous system until all medicines and tranquilizers had been stopped.

Dr. Ibrahim al-Alfi told Associated Press Television News that it would be 10 days before doctors at Mariar was "safe." "We still have a long way to go," she added.

The doctor said the 12 hour surgery on Saturday in the Nile Delta town of Benha, some 60 km north of Cairo, was the first surgery of its kind in the Middle East. Al-Alfi said AP'24 that Mariar would remain on a ventilator until she stopped having convulsions, for which she was being medicated.

BABY Magdi with her twin who never fully developed attached to her by the head.

Mariar died immediately during surgery because of the major blood vessel that had to be severed, al-Alfi said, and there were complications in the city after the surgery including unstable blood pressure, hypothermia, poor liver function and the blood not coagulating.

"Happily, within 24 hours we stabilized her," al-Alfi said. AP

18th-century copper penny auctioned

BEVERLY HILLS—A copper penny minted in 1793 and kept in a tobacco tin for decades was auctioned for $417,000.

Anthony Terranova of New York City was the highest bidder at Monday's auction, said Dave Hostetter, spokesperson for Beverly Hills auction house Ira & Larry Goldberg Coin & Collectibles Inc.

The penny's owners were descendants of Oliver Wolcott, the governor of Connecticut in the 1770s and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, according to auctioneer Ira Goldberg.

"Its historical importance of this coin cannot be overstated," said Richard Hershman, vice president of Professional Coin Grading Service, which classed a team of experts who authenticated the coin.

The chocolate-colored penny, the ninth known example of its type, bears the date 1793, an inscription "Parent of Science & Industry: Liberty" and the likeness of a woman's head representing Miss Liberty. Goldberg said. AP

FIRST IN 200 YEARS

Princess Aiko next in line for Japan's throne

TOKYO—Japan is preparing for a stepping surprise for the first time in more than 200 years as the government drafts legal changes allowing female successors.

Japan's royals are facing their most serious succession crisis in centuries. The current law bars women from ascending the Chrysanthemum Throne and so Prince Naruhito's only child, Princess Aiko, is the top-ranked heir to the imperial family since the 1940s.

Kyodo News quoted an unnamed government official as saying the 3-year-old "Princess Aiko will go next" after her father, Crown Prince Naruhito, in line for the throne. The report gave no other details, and there was no answer late Monday from the prime minister's office.

Princess Aiko is the only child of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako.

A panel of government experts began debating an amendment to the law last month but was not due to reach a conclusion until later this year. The panel has the power to recommend that the first born child—be it boy or a girl—should be first in line to the throne.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was expected to act on the panel's recommendations, which would also need to win approval from Parliament.

Recent polls have placed public support for changing customs at above 80 percent. Hiroshi Hoshiyama, the head of the 10-member panel, has said public opinion would be the most important factor in any decision.

The current rules—seen by some as the remnants of male chauvinism that dated back to the country's feudal era—limit succession to male descendants of the male-only ruler.

The law has put enormous pressure on Masako to have a baby boy to ensure that the throne's line of succession is not broken. The former career diplomat has been forced to spend much of the past year out of the public eye as she recuperates.

In a brief statement on her 41st birthday in December, Masako said: "I feel my health is getting better gradually."

Akiko Tsuyuzaki, grand master of the crown prince's family, told the media on the occasion of her birthday that the princess was "heading toward recovery" but stood really still and didn't sleep soundly.

Masako gave up a promising career in Japan's foreign ministry to marry Naruhito 12 years ago. Many Japanese had hoped the modern and multilingual princess would help shake up the conservative, tradition-minded imperial family and the Imperial Household Agency which runs the royals' affairs.

Last year, Naruhito ordered a review when he suggested that unidentified palace officials had contributed to Masako's illness by not showing respect for her hard-pressed career.

The turmoil has raised calls for allowing an empress to ascend to the throne and for reforms of the agency.

A woman last sat on the Chrysanthemum Throne from 1762 to 1771, when Emperor Momozono reigned until abdicating in favor of her nephew.

Seven other women have occupied the throne throughout its 1,500 years of documented history, but they all served as temporary caretakers until males could take over. None of them offspring ever succeeded them. AP

THEN The photo dated Sept. 4 2002 shows Japanese Princess Masako holding her daughter Princess Aiko. AP

Still frail, Pope slowly resumes activities

VATICAN CITY—Three weeks after being rushed to the hospital with breathing problems, Pope John Paul II is slowly resuming his regular activities while making clear—once again—that he has no intention of stepping down.

Joking with visitors, the Vatican said the frail Pontiff will appear at his weekly public audience Wednesday for he will greet and bless the faithful from his apartment window overlooking St. Peter's Square.

However, the Vatican also said John Paul will hold his first meeting with a foreign dignitary since his illness, an audience Tuesday with the prime minister of Croatia, a Roman Catholic bastion in the Balkans.

He also met Monday with a group of Spanish bishops making a periodic visit to the Vatican.

For the moment, a Vatican official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said decisions on the 84-year-old Pope's availability will be made on a day-to-day basis.

Whenever John Paul addresses the faithful in various languages during his weekly audience, scores of people are brought up to the stage in the Vatican auditorium to kiss his ring or shake his hand. That would expose him to catching different at a time when hundreds of thousands of Italians have been stricken with the flu.

As the Pope has weakened physically over the past decade, the world has gotten used to seeing him struggling with his speech because of Parkinson's disease and remaining seated on a wheelchair because of crippling knee and hip ailments.

John Paul appeared in good form and spoke in a strong, relatively clear voice during his Sunday address at St. Peter's Square, his second since being released from the hospital Feb. 1.

From the window at the Vatican, the 84-year-old Pontiff read his main address, stopping briefly to cough and skipping a Latin prayer him reminding to the end with no apparent problems.

It was a marked contrast from recent speeches in which the Pontiff has struggled to catch his breath. Aides have declared many of his speeches for him, a practice that will clearly continue because of John Paul's speech problems.

His words Sunday carried a particular message—his desire to remain not to step down.

"In spite of the 'special role' entrusted to [Saint] Peter and his successors," I feel of "remaining in the service of the unity of the Church."

"That cannot but sound as an indirect confirmation—as if one was still needed—of his will to continue as Pope, despite the growing difficulties," said the leading Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera.

Because of his ailments, there has long been speculation that John Paul might consider resigning. That debate was fueled during his hospitalization when the Vatican's No. 2, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, declared in an interview that possibility owing it was up to the Pope's "conscience." AP

POPE John Paul II blesses pilgrims and faithful during his traditional appearance at the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square as the Vatican locked the end news Angelus prayer Feb. 26. AP

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OPINION

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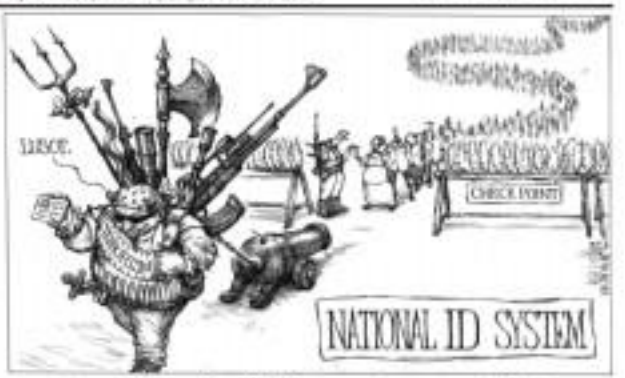

Caught

AT THE PRESENTATION of the Millennium Project report of the United Nations at the Hotel Dusit in Makati City last week, President Macapagal-Arroyo outlined: "Many government officials are being charged with corruption. Soon, they will not only be charged, they will have their ill-gotten gains forfeited to the government. That is my next instruction to our anticorruption officials."

EDITORIALS The statement followed reports about recent gains in another war—the war on graft and corruption.

The week before, obviously according to public clamor, the President "sacked" the acting secretary of public works and highways. Also, on the basis of complaints filed by private citizens, the Ombudsman suspended a deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Customs. Two congressmen were also earlier ordered suspended by the Ombudsman for acts of corruption committed in their previous posts as provincial officials. Of course, before them, there were the military officials, led by Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, Lt. Gen. Jacinto Ligot and Col. George Rabusa who were tagged either for unexplained wealth or for commission deals.

Undeniably, the war on corruption, under the Arroyo administration, has never looked this good, as its band gets heftier with bigger and bigger fishes. Let us look at the records: 81 corruption cases are pending with the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission; 100 have been endorsed to the Ombudsman and 23 to the Office of the President. These are the figures as of Jan. 31, 2005, mostly the "harvest," so to speak, from the lifestyle check that was started in 2003.

Aside from the high officials mentioned, the list of the accused includes two undersecretaries (of the DPWH and the Department of the Interior and Local Government), an assistant secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communications; the chief of a special investigation division of the Bureau of Internal Revenue; the general manager of the Laguna Lake Development Authority; and regional directors and assistant regional directors, among others. Notably, many of the accused come from the Armed Forces, DPWH, BOC and SSS, which are not surprisingly among the agencies generally perceived to be corrupt.

But not yet

PROMISING as the picture may seem to be, the furthest from the lifestyle checks is far from any assurance of success or complete victory in the war against corruption. Given the prevalence of corruption in all levels of government, the numbers are still relatively much too low. And even as the government seem to be scoring big lately, there is no clear sign that the enemy has slacked off.

In fact, Transparency International recently ranked the Philippines No. 2 among the world's most corrupt countries. The ranked public works secretary stays with his department as undersecretary, bosses in rank but definitely still high in the totem pole, influential and powerful. Garcia, who has accumulated a large hoard of unexplained wealth, has only been charged with dishonesty, gross misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and has yet to be charged with the heinous crime of plunder. And there were the big fishes who seemingly were so easily let off after being caught in the net.

In fact, there are other officials, who are perceived by the public to be no less, if not far more, corrupt, but who seem to remain untouched. Thus, doubts persist about the sincerity and resolve of the government in bringing the war against corruption to its logical conclusions.

Doubtless, the public is acting to see the government's lifestyle dragnet spread more widely to catch bigger fishes in other government institutions, like Congress, for example. But it is not enough, though, to discover which public officials flunk the lifestyle check or even to shame them by making their names known to the public. The real challenge to the administration lies in pursuing the cases until those crooks are put away permanently and, as the President promised, their ill-gotten wealth are turned over to the national treasury.

Pinoys have had bad experiences with IDs

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE PROPOSED National Identification Card System has once more suddenly divided public officials and the public the same way the voter-added tax (VAT) has divided them. The Salvador's Day two-mile bandstrings has never been] public officials now proposing the ID system, but the public is in bigger terror of an ID system than of bombs. The ID, which will contain basic information about the holder, is seen to ruin the privacy of the individual, a right guaranteed by the Constitution, say those who are opposed to it.

Curiously, Filipinos really like ID cards. The average Filipino has a few of them, a driver's ID, an SSS or GSIS ID's, a citizen's ID, a membership or school ID, a numbered vehicle sticker which identifies the owner of the vehicle, a credit card, a passport...a numbers certificate, etc. There are all identification cards constitutionally guaranteed by the individual. Senate President Franklin Drilon told the Rajahan in Manila last Monday. The national ID will only continue in one card all the information already contained in all those different ID cards.

"What right to privacy is being violated by merely putting on one card the basic information the individual has already voluntarily put in the other cards?" Drilon asked. "Instead of having a wallet full of cards, he will have only one card."

Practically every civilized country in the world, including the United States which is the champion of democracy and privacy, has an ID system, Drilon noted. The Philippines is one of the very few that still doesn't have one.

Unfortunately, logic doesn't explain why Filipinos are allergic to the national ID system. The explanation is more psychological. Filipinos have had unpleasant experiences with IDs in the past.

During the Spanish regime, Filipinos were required to carry cedulas, which is the counterpart of today's residence certificate. It was a badge of servitude. Indios were required to show them to Guardia Civil agentes. In fact, was the cedula that Andres Bonifacio and his Katipuneros tore up their cedulas in the landmark act a gesture of their revolution against Spain.

During the Japanese Occupation, Filipinos were also required to show their residence certificates to Japanese soldiers. If they didn't have any they were slapped and beaten up.

Filipinos are afraid the same thing will happen with a national ID system: people losing their wallets will be arrested by cops and soldiers and told to produce their IDs and if they don't have any or they find something suspicious with the IDs, they would be jailed the same way the martial law regime of Marcos did. Can you blame Filipinos for being suspicious of IDs?

But the best reason I can argue against an ID system is the uselessness of it all. The system is the government's antidote to corruption. But it is hard to understand how a piece of card or plastic will do it. Perhaps the theory is that it will identify a corruptor. How, I don't know. Perhaps the police will have a list of known corruptors and compare the names and photos on the list with those on the ID cards.

But as Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said, with a notorious foolish contempt to give her own words, "Kung mga tao rin lang, eh di wag na lang." If we will have a corrupt system, it's still going to corrupt the opposition.

And won't we just give more business to the forces forgery? The Swiss counterpartment [taken by the way continue to ply their illegal trade even with the best they could do to stop them] are no good: they can produce almost any document one needs: passport, license, birth, driver's license, [illegible], marriage certificate, school records, even PSA birth certificate showing that he was not a Filipino. Same it, they can promise it with such surprising accuracy that foreign embassies no longer accept Philippine documents as proof of anything.

Now it's my one presidente thrust the sentence convincingly, won't they try to produce IDs, too? Considering that there would be 80 million Filipinos who would need IDs, that would indeed be big business. Which means the whole exercise to flush out corruption would be a waste of scarce money and an exercise in futility.

The government is not known to close a not-losing. The IT will be used for the ordinary card has will be made of hard-as-diaphane plastic so some other material so that will make a fake easy to detect. That remains to be proven. But even assuming it can be done, that means the ID will be like the expensive, hard-to-get cedulas. Ten million of Filipinos who will ask for them, the whole exercise is going to cost tens of billions of pesos, money a bankrupt government cannot afford.

Which means, in fact, that this is not the time to do it. Even now, Congress is having a hard time passing a measure to increase the VAT because people strongly oppose it, how can the government ask the people to pay more money when it is not even trying to cut expenses? Or, on the contrary, is thinking of how ways to spend more money it doesn't even have yet?

Worse, the government is going to use part of that money to invade their privacy and even spy on citizens. If the government [illegible] on its spending, a national ID system, I think the new revolution will be provoked by the Cry of Malabon when people will gather in the most famous street and tear up their photos IDs.

But I have my own proposal to make. Filipinos accept the ID system and even it enables it to get one. Considering how many Filipinos want for the given card, let's make our ID card green.

Ghosts

THERE'S THE RUB

Gemino de Quiros

HAMPTON Tides, author of "Ghost Soldiers," gives the narrative version of his book a pic on the flank. The movie is "The Great Raid," which stars Benjamin Bratt and our very own Cesar Montano. It tells of the daring rescue of human prisoners held by the Japanese in Cabanatuan during World War II. That happened at a time when the Japanese were being pushed back and fast taken to surrender their prisoners-of-war camps. In all, some 500 Americans were rescued by the raid, which involved 120 US Rangers and 80 Filipino guerrillas.

Tides was here a couple of weeks ago to speak at the University of the Tides during the commemoration of the end of World War II. (UP itself was on two fighting sides by the end of the Japanese Occupation. Talking about the movie that was based on his book, Tides said he was glad it turned closely to the spirit of the original, which wasn't just to give cinematic credit to the Filipino but to show the horrors of war. He said he was glad the movie didn't have the triumphalist air of many Hollywood World War II movies and the jingoistic one of much of those that spawned after 9/11. "I was skeptical at first. But they did a good job. They showed the horrors of war," the author-turned-film actor said. Even although the Cabanatuan mission was successful, the barracks was dark. Why do we have wars? We come to the realization that war is a terrible thing."

It's a very good reminder from someone who, if he hasn't seen the horrors of war up close and personal, has at least done so up close by way of research. And a most timely one it is, given the painful the Filipino and most in particular might draw between himself and Filipino heroes fighting side by side against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf.

War is hell, not an action movie. In an action movie, one rides a good and decent hero, one who is kind and—the other cruel. In real life, it's not always so clear who's right or wrong, who's the heroes and who's not. In an action movie, the faceless enemy are machine-gunned in mass and get knockup on their shots, in real life, shots, women and children get [illegible] and die in a huddle.

There is the other side of war, something that's ghoulish now, or rendered invisible, is so over-massive and jingoistic thereafter. The other side of the Pacific War I've been caught glimpses of. The atrocities the Japanese wrought on their Asian neighbors were real, as Mary Stallsdell reminded us in her time past: serving a couple of weeks ago to mark the 60th anniversary of the "Liberation of Manila." The atrocities Japanese soldiers were on a killing spree, bayoneting everyone in sight or herding them into churches and burning them alive. But the atrocities inflicted on the Japanese by their enemies, as well indeed as on the Japanese people by their own government, were just as real. The Ground Zero sites in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—they are not called that, but they deserve the same name—are painful and eternal reminders of that.

The Hamptons movie's the same, they do not paint it. The one image I've gotten about the madness of war from the Japanese viewpoint has been supplied by novelist Masakazu's biography "The Ninth Up Rod Chronicle." The father of one of the characters there is a reservist who has been assigned to supervise a POW camp in Manchuria. As the Chinese people are driving them out toward the end of the war, he gets an order from his superiors to kill the soldiers. They can no longer feed them, and sending home their spirits and other dangerous materials, which are famished and carding their rages, poses nonsense to the community.

Several pages follow about the difficulty and absurdity of managing an order one regards as immoral, but refusing it is unthinkable. Ultimately he carried out by explosive than has not one of ammo, too). The result is both to torture and jeopardy. What is what was it all about, but like burning down another's house to get rid of the flies? Happy Ghost called it "one of the greatest war stories ever made." And the accounting rising since it is that. It is an action? Other critics added in Hiro's assessment, "first-rate animation."

Directed by Isao Takahata, "Grave" tells the story of a brother and sister who are orphaned during the War. The father is still fighting somewhere in the Pacific and the mother dies in an air raid. They live with a relative for a while, but that soon after being [illegible] appropriated. They live in the middle of the city in a cave, foraging for food variously from wild crops and the kindness of farmers. Both wild crops and the kindness of farmers dry up. It's everything the farmers can do to feed themselves, [illegible] to feed the townsmen by selling them rice while waiting for the war to end and their fathers to come home. The girl never sees the end of the war. She dies of hunger despite the frenzied efforts of her older brother to feed [illegible] and keep them together.

Tale of poignant, this one person you in the heart with never pull.

Nitta does well to remind us of what the Greek tragedians, notably Euripides, have been saying all this time but which we keep forgetting each time a rubber-heeled boot in the cargo [illegible] of the glory to come from ensuring the enemy. Some of this is to say that we may not fight back when oppressed or defend ourselves when attacked. All of it is to say that war is not a search, as we [illegible].

Pacifism is not self-minded, it is tough-minded. You cannot find anything softer than piety than the brain of a soapbox, or a war-monger.

Security nightmares

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE MALACAÑANG line-bombing to throw blame and responsibility for the Feb. 14 Valentine's Day bombings on the communist rebels and the Abu Sayyaf group is typical of the counterterrorist response to combat a national IS system. This time, the revival of a bombing was something more ambitious—the resurrection of a "counterterrorist" internal security act. The suspended plan could create more nightmares for those who have feared that the installation of the ID system would establish the foundations of a potential authoritarian apparatus of a police state.

Malacañang's communications director, Ignacio Bunye, revealed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has given the go-ahead for the drafting of legislation that would incorporate an ID system into the anti-terrorism bills pending in Congress.

Admiral said the plan was to consolidate all the bills into an "internal security act that would respond to the threat that we have now," referring to an internal security bill that have been in the can and shelved because they have been opposed by human rights groups.

"But in the plan reformers don't want to just an ID system for the entire country. The rebranding was to emphasize that it is not just an ID system but a security system," Bunye explained.

Internal security acts have been rightfully in disfavor since the end the war on terrorism. Moreover, they have also been the excuse use of authoritarian regimes, which are using other draconian measures as weapons of political harassment and not just to defend themselves from terrorist actions. They are, therefore, double-edged weapons that are more likely to damage political freedom than combat terrorist threats.

Any internal security act that includes security act acts could substantiate the ID plan but also pave it in the corridors of the fight against terrorism, which is now the highest security concern of democracies. It chills the citizen's privacy from the reaction he is of the national ID system.

Opposition to the national ID system has remained from concern that it could be abused by the authorities to curtail citizens' rights and could enable law enforcement agents to launch political witch-hunts on the pretext of fighting criminality.

The ID plan received a boost from the Valentine's Day bombings which prompted the administration, at least in the beginning, to urge Congress to approve the national ID bill that would authorize the installation of the system. Its passage is intended as a remedy to the 1987 Supreme Court decision declaring as unconstitutional the national identity system issued to former President Fidel Ramos establishing the national ID system. The Court held that the order contravened "improper delegation of legislative powers."

Local officials are keen on turning their localities into police states to demonstrate the workability of the ID system.

But proponents of the ID scheme have failed to make a strong case that it is defining from that the scheme would not violate the privacy of citizens. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye cited arguments they used to make to justify the case for the system, but they tended to show that it was politically motivated. "We should not be afraid of the ID system," he said. "We cannot use our freedoms as excuses since the public would provide the same information that they already gave elsewhere."

Bunye also implied that the information they would be required for the ID system are already supplied to applicants for driver's licenses or for membership in the Government Service Insurance System or the Social Security System. But passing for information may be found in the Bureau of Internal Revenue and trade guild.

But if information is already available from these sources, what's the point of a national ID system? This is precisely what Gen. Ramos claims: that the government has other intentions than building a non-tabled data base or to distract communists, however, the public suspicions are true.

The other argument is that the ID system would be the ultimate efficacy of a business-friendly democracy. The government's promotion over investment and remittances is matched only by that of the left which fears like the ID system could be used as a weapon to check out political undesirables.

The plan to introduce the ID system has been on sale years but are bound to expire to immediate implementation. Public hearings conducted in Congress have showed that the government would need P1.6 billion to produce a cyber-ID card and to be issued to 40.2 million Filipinos between 18 and 65 years of age, at the cost of P50 a card. There is no provision in the 2005 national budget for 50 cards.

Even if security authorities have access to income tax returns that would help track down criminals and terrorists, we are not sure this will improve their competence in using intelligence not only to prompt terrorist arrests, but also to catch terrorists before they strike. The fact that security agencies can not effectively information collected by the ID system is a glaring weakness, all those plans to "win hearts and minds" system will come to naught.

If the government has failed to make a persuasive case for the ID system, it has failed to make a campaign case for the internal security act which offers wider opportunities for political abuse than an ID scheme. To make a case, the administration needs a more persuasive rationale than fear. Without convincing fear, the public will not be receptive to attempts that the state organizations of those responsible for terrorism.

In the meantime, let's use the pause in the fight against terrorism to reflect on the real issues that have been raised by the Feb. 14 bombings. Let's not be rushed by panic into hasty measures that will not be effective in the long run.

A fun, inclusive prom

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AT THE HEIGHT of the Jollibean dancing craze, I wondered why talent people set up event workshop and clubbing and camping all over the dance floor when all I could do once upon become in my day as the "mock, pops." "Where did we ride, dance in the air and go to sleep?"

There is contrast to me. I never went to a prom, and then note felt the need to have one from event during at least the kind who likes rap and reggae and "Pinoy" music. And by that I have to say I think he missed it too. I, after all, who went on pride in the school paper to host "alternative" a would be to hold an elaborate Asian theme. Even in the midst of the widespread disapproval of the Asian theme, I still liked it.

The graduating seniors at the time agreed and unfamiliar dubbed event a process complete their high school experience. But when we became seniors, they barely made up enough to cover basic of social funding, as the parents formed instead an "alternative prom" held in a social hall with simple fare and no alcohol. Only many years of social funding at the parents-formed instead an "alternative prom" held in a social hall with simple fare and no alcohol. Only many years of social funding at the parents-formed instead an "alternative prom" held in a social hall with simple fare and no alcohol. Only many years of social funding at the parents-formed instead an "alternative prom" held in a social hall with simple fare and no alcohol.

I had learned even the last-frozen assumption, for by the time I was spending my after-school hours tinkering in the music and rolling organ.

Which is why I was glad to see that the same issue suggested recently when I saw invited to an "alternative" prom called "Prom na Feast" or "Bra Bunga. Organized by Magsaysay-area Project which is the new limited knowledge of many will, but is roughly patterned on Let's go friends, let's crash the opposite prom."

* * *

OPPOSITE? I guess? What's not to like about a night of dressing up, dancing and, if the group up a sentenced, just maybe, making out?

Well, as explained by the organizers from Pilipaz, an organization of young people dose as "Filipinos who are concerned that the many have predetermined into a "rite of passage" for many young people, but the "unwritten rules" governing this institution have also served to make it unpleasant, if not downright traumatic for some teens.

"There are unwritten prom rules that need to be followed if one doesn't want to be discriminated against or be labeled a 'nobody,'" say the "Prom na Feast" organizers. One invitation rule is that you must be in the "popular" crowd to get invited to the prom. Another is that "appropriate" prom wear means formal and expensive attire that conform to society's stereotypes.

"Because of this, many young people just resort to plain and outdated," explains Pilipaz, especially young people whose parents don't afford an dressy gown or shoulder the expense, or those who don't belong to the "popular" crowd and don't simply care. Last year, on the night, and seeing gays and lesbians and other minorities. "A young people's personhood is measured and boxed from his or her ability to create a date," so the event leaders.

Which is why they said, prom materie can bring with it not just excitement and anticipation, but also "oppressive social concepts like heterosexism, the primacy of money and popularity, the privileges of wealth, and the perpetuation of petty pressure to make young people miserable in society's distance."

So, in a decide to "promote self-affirmation, responsible celebrations and solidarity among young people," and that "prom" does not have to be expensive to be fun, the event leaders organized a "Prom na Feast" at the College of Social Work and Community Development in the University of the Philippines.

* * *

WOULD this "alternative prom" collapse under the weight of its serious intentions?

I'm glad to report that it didn't. For by the time I arrive in the venue, the air-conditioned hall had already heated up with an estimated 300 youths filling up the dance floor. While I stayed a few paces, stared and came out, most donned to dance, sprang each other's cargo.

With other named parties—Modus Ulamo of Modus and Ego Mangia, host of the defunct TV show "Out"—formed the dance floor in search of winners in such categories as "Best in Gown," "Most Creative Attire," "Couple Most Likely to Be Nobody" to-be announced, we noted that while the young women took to some of their everyday wear at prom and sees, a was merely young men who chose to make an appearance in "fashionable" prom wear, as gowns and tuxedos. Both girls and men sexual, pressing a dirty ballad beat and funk, teasing their blue-flavors and styles from about.

One young man showed off his well-toned muscles with a sleeveless shirt through short, for which he was appropriately given the "I Love My Body" award. "Most Creative Attire" went to the get-up of a youth leader who had fashioned pockets for his shirt and ripped pants to make them "punk."

* * *

HIGHLIGHT of the evening was the "tradition," which featured ten pairs of dancers from pairs of the audience who were invited to dance for the ball; an adult leader "bequeathed" to a young person an item symbolizing his or her "coming of age," from a "single mom's" shirt would grant to a young woman, to the pacifier of a young person's embrace of independence of sexuality.

Of course, the evening brought back memories of my own high school prom, but I suspect as a consequence of my own troublesome times. I could only wish that back then, we activist youth had enough creativity to think of an alternative activity—one that wouldn't have caught up a year that would only leave years later—that reminiscences of purpose does not preclude having fun, and that having one is having fun, one could not in fact achieve one's purpose. Not saying guess I would join the revolution, but only if I can dance.

The way to Baguio

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

LAST Friday the Rizalist Council's Child Outpost series of activities to celebrate its anniversary. It started with the usual change a thanksgiving Mass, the unveiling of a bronze National Elderly Center, the launching of the outpost's website, and the launching of postage stamps with a picture of the club as a locked a century ago. These were followed by golf tournaments, photo exhibits, exciting and drinking to celebrate the club's surviving for a hundred years.

The club was established through the initiative of William Cameron Forbes, the governor general of the Philippines who a few months before the event in Manila that Cavite, his name, but a straightforward, "Rizal Club" was not to be. The name unofficially assigned another district without even rather than limited the well-meaning designs. Other Manila names were threatened by legislators who want to name famous streets on Espeleta and Taft Avenue after the elected officials.

Forbes is also remembered for the episode per ed commission in Malolos called Forbes Park, reluctant name is pronounced correctly but is sometimes unwittingly referred to as "Forbes Park" because some people who want to be buried in this exclusive enclave subdivision in the manner is filled with newspaper ads. From "Forbes" in Manila to "Rizal" in Malolos... that's a world of difference but not for Forbes!

Let's go back to contemporary history and get back 100 years to know more about the Baguio Country Club. I shared off the new baby volumes of "The Philippine Islands" by Forbes himself and published in Boston in 1928. I was surprised to find in the first volume, of which includes the history of the Philippines and to center the pillars of American colonial government in the 20th—Civil Government, Public Order, Finances, Justice, Health, Public Works, Education, Commerce which depicted the Philippines. Never let me that was the proliferation of the new Chinese

Mestizo Road built by an army colonel named C. W. Rosario at a cost of well over $1 million dollars), which Forbes described as "a fine piece of road." Forbes believed that the great expense was merely incurred to give a handful of high colonial officials a cool place for rest and relaxation. I'm sure digging into contemporary materials on the building of Baguio Road will be more rewarding.

When people plan a trip to Baguio to find cheap clues living is much cheaper and convenient, but people can't control the prices once you're inside the city. Accommodations, food, transportation, and souvenirs are all more expensive. This should relate into account traffic, going around tricycles, trucks, and buildings, and making the usual rest and meal stops along the way. But there are cheaper alternatives and it is right that Manila's High-way which is supposedly longer but faster, or the more historic Road, which is shorter but takes longer to travel.

To take the Forbes Park Road due to get to Baguio from Manila one had to take a bus "to San Fernando, de La Union, and from there by horseback on a very bad road known as the Mountain Province." The trip took the course of the main route. This was a common activity once a year, as mentioned already a date was fixed to leave the hills, which in itself constituted a vehicle day."

This is hard to imagine today but this was the same route taken by William Howard Taft who made a trip to Baguio on horseback. There is a famous photograph of the heavy-smiling Taft on his horse and an equally famous quotation uttered when he reported to US Secretary of War Elihu Root that he made a trip to Baguio in one piece.

As for me, I can't say the same for the horse.

Another trip I'd like to make is to go over the historic to the Baguio Road. It took about 9,000 men to work their way up, blasting a total out of the mountains and paving these into what later became known as Road. Forbes recalled:

"On the Baguio Road there is no crying over the hills, to hope that one manipulated it to the service end of the side-rail in Dagupan that ends the province of Pangasinan to the end of the road, from which point the remainder of the trip was made on horseback. The Baguio Road is a marvel of the road, which passed from camp to camp of road-builders, until finally, at a point called 'Camp Four,' all passengers had to take to horses and follow a new rail which rightangled up the mountain side on an incredibly steep grade, where it was often necessary to walk, leading the horses. The rail reached the high levels at a place called Loakan, from which point seven miles of delightful rail led rolling on over grades brought with little more than the latest cycle of Baguio."

Even when Taft left the Philippines to assume the post of secretary of war in Washington, he was keen to see the completion of this road up to Baguio.

Today it is easier to get to Baguio, but there is far less changed from the Olympia's days' described a century ago. The same old pine that inspire made the ascent and entry into the city is one more. As a matter of fact, there's even a relatively pine tree on the Baguio Road leading to the latest theater of projects...BUDbuppingBuilt.

Looking at Baguio's past will help us appreciate the city and hope to preserve its climate and character.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@hotmail.com

AIDS: low simmer or slow boil?

FOR the past few days, groups doing HIV/AIDS work in the Philippines—government, non-government, local and international—have been buzzing with activity, everyone busy preparing for a big AIDS meeting, now going on at the Manila Hotel.

We have from Peter Piot to attending the meeting, he being the head of UNAIDS, an inter-agency body coordinating HIV/AIDS work throughout the world. The conference is supported by the Swedish Embassy and the Asian Development Bank.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I was asked to write a paper on the intervention this field is in decline because of perceived complacency. To make up for this, I promised my friends at UNAIDS a column summarizing my comments around HIV/AIDS in the country.

Let me start by explaining why doesn't so much attention around HIV/AIDS in the Philippines. Many recent AIDS reports have been prompted by the fact that HIV—now affecting more than 40 million people worldwide—hasn't gone on a rampage in the Philippines. "Low and slow" is the way the epidemic is described in the Philippines. The Department of Health's AIDS Registry says there are 1,500 cases so far. No doubt, there are many more unreported cases, but even taking underreporting into account, the country is that less than one percent of the adult population is infected. Compare that to a prevalence rate of about 2 percent in Thailand and, in some southern African countries, of up to 25 percent, and it seems like a small problem.

Ideally-facts, we need to keep the epidemic at the low and slow level, because if it goes out of control, we know from the experience of other countries that the costs are like disaster, adding to our already long list of economic and social woes.

Safety and complacency

It's clear that the epidemic in the Philippines may be low and slow because as early as the 1980s, clearly after HIV/AIDS was recognized as an international problem, our government and NGOs began to act. Some readers will remember the massive HIV/AIDS education campaigns in the past, which deluge of seminars, workshops and educational materials.

Unfortunately, our efforts have declined. Three days, we used to have 40 HIV/AIDS events for the boring months up about reporting new infections, as we have mentioned in previous columns paper of issues are awaken having treated patients and gone into dealing.

The result? Public awareness levels of HIV seem to be on the downturn. The other week, in a research methods class I study to seniors at the University of the Philippines, I asked HIV/AIDS as an example for survey questionnaires. When I asked the students if they thought HIV would be transmitted by mosquitoes, almost half of them actually thought this was possible.

The 2003 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), with a sample of 13,633 women and 4,344 men aged 15-49 years, gives us very alarming numbers concerning HIV/AIDS awareness. Nationwide, some three-tenths of respondents have heard about AIDS. But this awareness level varies across women groups and regions. For example, in the discussions Region 10, Mindanao (Northern Mindanao), only 8 percent of women and 16 percent of men had heard of HIV/AIDS.

Researchers since Kinsey apply only to awareness, among "having heard" of HIV/AIDS. When you get to specific knowledge about HIV, we have even more disturbing findings. Some 40 percent of women and 40 percent of men, for example, do not know that using condoms prevents HIV infection. About 20 percent of both men and women believe AIDS can be transmitted by supernatural elements.

Dangerous denial

The National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) didn't ask people if they believed the difference between HIV and AIDS. But I've observed that many university professors, there's still regulations about the two terms. So we chose to refer them to AIDS to emphasize the difference here. HIV means Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes HIV disease. Once infected with HIV, a person's immune system weakens over time and he or she becomes susceptible to infections and diseases that usually do not affect healthy people. For AIDS or Acute Immunodeficiency Syndrome. Without access to drugs to fight the virus, a person will, after several years, develop AIDS. But during the years of infection without AIDS—a time without any signs or symptoms—the person can pass the virus on to others people.

The most dangerous thing is that many people continue to look for "signs" of HIV infection as if they existed. Sex workers, for example, will insist that they don't need to use condoms since they can tell if their customers are "clean." Conversely, the male clients of these sex workers will insist they don't need to use condoms if they get sex from fresh boat hires and boat hostesses that don't have foreign customers.

Periodically, we'll hear some radio talk show commentators calling for widespread testing for HIV/AIDS, this reflects ignorance about HIV/AIDS. No government already requires "mandatory testing" for HIV/AIDS, for example, for OFW applicants, or for those applying for marriage licenses. The tests for HIV only detect antibodies to the virus produced after an infection occurs. The problem is that there may be a delay of several months before the antibodies show up in the blood. Hence, a person may have already been infected but still test negative.

Discrimination

Ignorance about HIV/AIDS leads to denial about the risks of HIV/AIDS, and risky behavior. The NDHS figures show that people are also discriminatory in their attitudes. They have a spread bias about preventive methods as well. For example, only 40 percent of women and 60 percent of men believe that condoms could prevent HIV.

Discrimination comes with denial. We denote HIV/AIDS as a problem "only" for our neighbors and their customers. Or, if we think about the risks among ourselves, we think mainly of gay men and sex workers. The reality is that HIV infections among overseas workers have increased, too, among domestic helpers and seamen, and locally among businessmen, many of whom have been behind in their wives. Many people who get HIV/AIDS perceive themselves as even if they suspected their spouses' were infidelities. As the statistics suggest, it is a risk we all are sharing.

Discrimination drives HIV/AIDS underground, contributing to its disregard in whispers. And if someone does get infected, he or she will choose to be quiet about it, maybe even to commit suicide, because of the stigma associated HIV. Unfortunately in the Philippines and overseas how close to death that is a more accepting environment, care and support for people with HIV/AIDS rather than part of the solution, rather than exacerbating the problem.

Gender inequality and discrimination can feed the spread of HIV. I wouldn't be surprised if the local epidemic has moved from a low simmer to a slow boil.

Behind MMDA's Bayani Fernando

I (EDSA) must will agree with me that motorists who want order, safety, dependence and discipline on our streets would have to say Chair Bayani Fernando of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority my down.

Fernando has brought back order to our roads. He gets back to the motorists what should be for motorists and to the pedestrians what truly belongs to the pedestrians. His solutions are simple and effective and his "return-it-to-owner, change-it-to-doesn't-normal" is practical.

Motorists deserve some respite from years of chaos on our roads. Fernando should never yield to calls for his ouster since these are definitely coming from known groups that thrive on disorder and chaos.

Definitely, there is still a lot of room for improvement. But driving through the major thoroughfares, one will notice that there have changed a lot for the better since Fernando assumed the top MMDA post. Instead of Fernando, Kung si ngi Gonzalez ay sabay some groups claim, the majority of the people are behind you and your good work.

—ROLAND LETELIER, rlpgarcia@sbcglobal.net

LETTERS

Keep it up!

What justice for martial law victims means

TOKI it is reaction to the editorial "Strange bedfellows" (PDI, 02/11/05) Obviously our position was either misunderstood or taken out of context.

Our stand is perfectly clear. The Marcos estate — its wealth—that is not ill-gotten—must be used to compensate the martial law victims. In our board statements to your paper titled "TOKI" to Marcos it's time Cannot block Your friends of Third" we clearly stated that it was wrong for Gen. Ferdinand E. Marcos & to say that he has no responsibility to compensate the victims of martial law abuses."

And we never mean to "trivialize" the sufferings of those who joined the anti-dictatorship struggle. In fact, we are maintaining the Martial Law Memorial. (Museum of Courage and Resistance) to honor and commit to the national memory their heroism and sacrifices, for which no amount of monetary compensation will be enough.

We respect the Supreme Court decision to give back Marcos' ill-gotten wealth to the Philippine government to be used for agrarian reform. But we also support the efforts of legislators in Congress to compensate martial law victims through legislation. But the government should not limit itself to compensating the victims with money from the ill-gotten wealth. The government's responsibility to the victims is to give them full restorative justice, which is not just monetary compensation. Restorative justice takes many forms—recognition, apology, reparation and societal efforts to ensure that injustice does not happen again. Reparation may take the form of rehabilitation, restitution or compensation.

We call on the government to officially recognize the human rights violations during martial law—not, by passing up a national murder for the victims. Official recognition also exonerates the prosecution of the perpetrators of human rights violations and plunder during martial law. It outlaws our struggle for the restoration of democracy that the perpetrators of injustice during the authoritarian rule still would so much minimize and political power today. Should not the government look at why Marcos et al. in the is gathering dust in the Court of Appeals all these years? And there are many other cases.

Or, perhaps, the government can allocate a budget for the creation of a Truth Commission that will comprehensively hear and document the horrors of martial law so that it can be a part of the memory of the nation.

Restorative justice and all these would be facilitated or achieved if the powers and resources (including funds) of the Philippine state are mobilized and used to ensure justice for the victims.

For us, and here we agree with Gonzalo de Quiros—"...victims to see one government for denigrating a part of the history not to deny, government owes it to them... justice demands compensation." (PDI, 2/10/05)

—ALFREDA A. PADUNG, M.D.H. executive director, Task force Detainees of the Philippines, 43 St. Mary's St., Lahan, Quezon City

All politics, no will

LIKE one of your honor writers, I am afraid the cause of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs officials who talked the "lifestyle check" have been whitewashed. They used and go unpunished, keeping the fear for themselves to enjoy, while we, ordinary mortals, have to make do with salaries far below decent living standards.

The Philippines is poor because of these crazies in government. Please, don't spend their lives (which could have gone to build big roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects) on political issues, administration, flashy cars and SUVs.

I don't President Macapagal-Arroyo, Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo or hand together and recruit go after these thieves, parading them behind bars. Come on Davide can do a lot to speed up trials of cases.

There is very little time left for here to work and work hard. I just takes politics! will to do it. And that is the big problem: all politics, no will!

—ROGER LUCILLA, 1868 Igmidiola St., Manila

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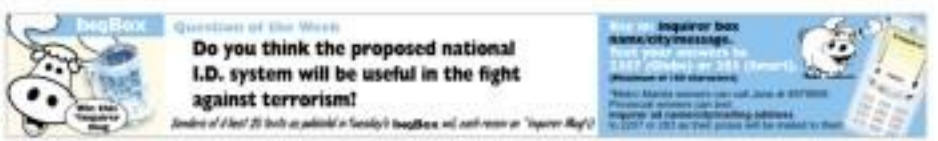

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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Editor Jun Bautista et al
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Conservationists lea drive to save 'kalaw'

THE KALAW or rufous hornbill, a threatened species, is an enduring symbol of the conservation, unity and loyalty of Ifugaos and Kankanaey in Cagayan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By Ernesto Cristo
Pelaez, Cagayan

THE HANGAS and leaves in Pelaez, Cagayan used to hear the chirping of the kalaw or rufous hornbill so often that they started expecting its familiar sound at specific hours of the day.

The familiar "kaaaw, kaaaw, kaaaw" of the kalaw (Buceros hydrocorax) would make residents up at 6 a.m., signal lunch at noon, and would be heard again at 2 p.m. and, finally, during the Angelus at 6 p.m.

But poaching and deforestation of forests in the town, the kalaw's favored habitat, had driven the bird deeper into the mountains.

Alarmed at the fast rate of deterioration of the bird's habitat, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Conservation International, the University of Kent in United Kingdom, and the United States-based Rare Center for Conservation have joined hands to save the kalaw and its habitat.

DENR officials said it was important to involve the communities's efforts in the drive because the kalaw symbolized the Ifuntogi and Isnareg values of loyalty, unity and cooperation.

Arsenio Pinangan, DENR director for Cagayan Valley, called the kalaw the "very symbol of the cooperative family lives of the Ifuntogi and Isnareg."

Melanie Bryan, ecosystem management specialist of the community environment and natural resources office (Cenro) in the capital city of Tuguegarao, said the project would be dubbed the "pride campaign" because they wanted residents to appreciate that the kalaw was a source of local pride.

DENR officials said the town's famous Coffee Town, a major tourist attraction in Cagayan, derived its name from the kalaw, whose population used to abound in the Pelaezkanan protected landscape and ecozone.

The kalaw is culturally attached to the people of Pelaezkanan and has been immortalized in the town's official seal.

Through the campaign, they wanted to deepen the public's understanding of the value of biodiversity and use the kalaw as a symbol of conservation, Bryan said.

She said the campaign, tested in about 30 communities, uses communities of grassroots and mass marketing techniques to generate support, enthusiasm and participation from all stakeholders for species and ecosystem protection.

DENR officials said the project would be implemented over a period of more than two years through a ₱10,000 fund. The money will come from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), a joint initiative of the l'Agence Francaise de Development, the Global Environment Facility, the Japanese government, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank.

According to its website, the CEPF provides "strategic assistance to non-governmental organizations, community groups and other civil society partners to help safeguard the earth's biodiversity hot spots."

"A fundamental goal is to connect civil society to engaged leadership, conservation science," the CEPF said.

Hornbill

The rufous hornbill is a "least threatened" species endemic to Luzon and the island province of Mindoro.

It is the largest among all species of hornbills (sometimes called the Great Philippine Hornbill). The features of male and female hornbills are alike but males vary in size, color and shape of the mandible upper portion of its beak.

The kalaw's feathers in its breast and upper belly are black. Young hornbills have white beak and their wings are black or light brown.

The bill is red with a large flat casque extending in a point to the tip of the bill. Male hornbills are larger and have longer wingspans than females.

Hornbills are omnivorous but most robust on fruits. They have long tails that help them achieve balance during flight. They are also known for carrying and feeding fruits to their mates during courtship.

Monogamous

Hornbills are known to be monogamous. They breed in established hollow cavities in trees during April, July, August and November. The female seals herself inside the holes and swallows her eggs there.

Sometimes, the male helps protect the female in her nest by blocking the nest's entrance with mud, food and droppings, leaving a small hole where food could be passed on to the female.

Studies show hornbills do this to protect the female and the chicks from predators. Incubation of eggs ranges from 22 to 46 days.

Hornbills also share parenting duties in feeding their chicks. They cooperate in small family groups in forests. They are often seen foraging or resting in the fig or canopy and flying, [illegible] and hopping, [illegible] trees and mountain slopes.

Cultural symbol

DENR officials said [illegible] to its different functions [illegible] maintains the health [illegible] of the surrounding [illegible]. They carry out in public [illegible] deep body musical or dance [illegible] populations of insects. The [illegible] value to a specific [illegible].

They can determine [illegible] of the country's forests [illegible] they need a number of [illegible] for roosting and for [illegible] a viable breeding population.

With the trees being [illegible], firewood and charcoal [illegible], DENR officials [illegible] marvel the survival of [illegible] the Philippine eagle is [illegible] and the diminishing population [illegible] considerably answered [illegible] ing destruction of their [illegible].

Love for environment

To the Ibanags (adjacent Ifuntogi and Isnareg), the kalaw's iconic ordinary bird because it represents their love for the environment and pride for their unique natural resources.

Dennis said Pelaezkanan residents and officials chose the kalaw to represent their desire for a healthy and sustainable environment.

Locals said the cooperative spirit of her skills in feeding their young and the seemingly close-knit relationship among them are very symbol to Ifuntogi and Isnareg families.

The DENR has identified illegal logging, firewood gathering, charcoal making and kaingin (slash-and-burn farming) as major threats to the protected area of Pelaezkanan and has adopted ways to stop these practices to save the town's enduring symbol.

In Baguio, watch where you step

By Vincent Cabreza
Baguio City

TOURISTS here keep tripping over Baguio City's sidewalk potholes for decades. Few have bothered to complain because they say these [illegible] these damn [illegible] flaws are part of the charm.

But as they troop in for the 38th Baguio Flower Festival this weekend, they will be falling on these known for far more expensive treasures.

The sidewalks of downtown Session Road are now paved with gold—ceramic gold.

On one end of the historic street, where the ayond Philippine theaters, [illegible] commercial on the right of the 20th century is a striking Asian motifs embedded in the sidewalk.

The ceramically intricate pieces, which could [illegible] as high as ₱20,000, according to [illegible] collection, was designed by [illegible] de Guia, first year's Philip Morris Artist's Choice and son of filmmaker Eddie Infantado.

Kawayan, with the help of a core group of artists, ranging from the veteran [illegible] to [illegible] Ilocos Norte to the impressionistic [illegible] and client children], created eight tiles made of clamshell, [illegible] and coloring like [illegible] from deeper like [illegible] of recorded sun.

Given the street and [illegible] will stumble on [illegible].

Henry Balanga, former president of the Baguio Arts Guild, and boutique Carlo Emma grafted to produce a black-tiled rendition of an old [illegible] Catholic church at the foot of the long main [illegible] that leads up to the Baguio Cathedral. Small footprints snake their way in the black [illegible].

John Alcantara, a professional [illegible], said it would be hard to [illegible] the crazy [illegible] of 307 [illegible] and mosaic paintings that were used to [illegible] the sidewalks [illegible] than a month.

Atelier, the [illegible] boutique [illegible] year's Panagbenga [illegible] festival, [illegible] Baguio's rich population of artists to fill up the [illegible] and [illegible] illustrators, city administrators.

[illegible] Ripao Ronnie gave [illegible] of [illegible] consistency, [illegible], filling up [illegible] with images of coloured black [illegible] rising aprons and hand-[illegible].

Ripao, Ifugao, Baloogan, Benguet, painters Allen Mansilungan and Cynthia Lagao, a visual and installation artist, collaborated on several landscape pieces which [illegible] fabrication collectively call "Lapa (earth)" because of the dominant brick tile material.

Kabunian do Guiza, Kalaf's youngest son, interpreted Nabi-Nonnie's [illegible] to the Baguio public.

Known for his [illegible] of [illegible] energy [illegible] painting the [illegible] Eddie's gallery. Enthusiastic [illegible] proceeds [illegible] smiling face that [illegible] a single eye, which [illegible] he simply call "Ifugao."

However cool [illegible] of life" literally helped build the murals. "We had seven children and, at one point, we [illegible] and [illegible] giggling about [illegible] grant, helped out," he said.

"We are reluctant about naming the art pieces," he admitted, "because they may not all last."

Scheduled is a ₱1,000 grant by the city government, the artists relied on carpenters scraps and [illegible] [illegible].

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2001

Across the NATION

Electricity to cost 37¢ more in North

By Peter Lo, Julius and Cristina Arzadon
PEI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN FERNANDO CITY—Electricity is expected to cost 37 centavos more following the approval by the Energy Regulatory Commission of the power adjustments being sought by the National Power Corp.

As always, electric utilities are expected in the first petitions to increase their power rates.

But a petition filed by a private electric company here to decrease the power rate, if approved, would be a historic La Union consumers.

It would also set a precedent nationwide.

"We are in a unique situation because there has never been a petition for power rate reduction," Jerry Parlan, La Union Electric Co. II service general manager, told the Inquirer.

It was the second time that Luelco would put on the rate adjustments. In 1986, the firm sought and succeeded in increasing its power rate.

Parlan said the firm would be buying cheaper electricity from Meralco (Philippines) Energy Corp.'s 414-Amperium BESS based in Bataan.

"It will be P0.04 per kilowatt hour lower than that of Napocor which has been supplying our power needs since 1983," he said.

He added that Luelco has entered into a 15-year power purchase agreement with Meralco to supply the cheap electricity.

The P0.04 discount will be passed on to the 71,000 customers here and in San Juan and Bauang towns. The La Union Electric Cooperative, based in Aringay town, supplies electricity to the other 10 towns.

Luelco's rate is P7 per kwh and the discount would translate to P490,000 in monthly savings or roughly P6 million annually for consumers.

Contract

Parlan said Luelco has a three-million kWh per month contract with Napocor but the latter has a monthly 30-million kwh consumption that it all buys from the power firm.

"We can access the excess power of more than 100% elsewhere," Parlan said, saying that the transition supply contract for the supply of electricity that Luelco signed with Napocor in August 2000 will expire in June 2005.

He said Luelco would be getting 100 percent of its power requirement from Meralco after June.

"The Electric Power Industry Reform Act allows us to go our electricity anywhere we want to," Parlan said.

The law, enacted in 2001, protects the interest of consumers, as it specifies that all distribution utilities are obligated "to supply electricity in the least cost manner to its captive market."

Luelco's petition for power reduction rests on the contract with Meralco, which must be approved by the ERC. All documents have been submitted and the hearing of Luelco's application for approval of the contract has been set either in Baguio or in San Fernando.

Second thoughts

However, Parlan expressed hope that the five-man ERC board might have second thoughts on the contract with Meralco, which was approved by the Luelco board last Jan. 5.

"They worry that the approved might have dire consequences," he said.

In Laoag City, power consumers could get set to ride because the local power company there would not reduce its electricity rates as well without any adjustment coming from its power suppliers.

Members of the Ilocos Norte provincial board reportedly asked the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (Inec) to either reduce its power rates or eliminate the so-called "pass-through charges" that Inec is collecting from consumers instead of their power consumption.

The pass-through charges—ranging from generation, transmission and system loss costs—are additional payments that Inec collects for and pays to the government and to its power providers.

These charges form part of the new billing statement under the unbundled rates that consumers have been receiving since late last year.

BALIKATAN

American and Filipino soldiers in the Balikatan '01 troops rally two their guns to work as masons and carpenters in the construction of school buildings in San Buenaventura village in Luisiana, Laguna.

Log retrieval in Aurora, Quezon messy

By Tonnee Orejas
PEI General Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The retrieval by government agencies of logs and lumber washed down by killer landslides in Aurora and Quezon in November and December last year was "unsystematic" and, at worst, "anomalous," breeding a bag-and-sell trade, if not outright timber poaching, the Inquirer learned.

"Magulo. The process is not clear," Fr. Antonio Evangelio, parish priest of Dingalan, Aurora, said of the retrieval process by the Samahang Kooperatiba Development Corp., the corporate arm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

During the Dingalan municipal council session on Monday, Evangelio said he learned that the SNDC had contracted Kasibu, a sawmill company, to gather the drifted logs and consolidate them at the old Nueva sawmill compound at the boundary of Barangays Aplaya and Poblacion.

He said residents and barangay officials themselves were involved in the recovery of logs that littered the shorelines of Dasi and of the Pacific Ocean and along rivers in the province.

The drifted logs, he noted, were being obtained in a "hide-and-seek" manner, indicating that timber poaching was not being done this time for up in the mountains but where the logs had washed.

Evangelio said there are also traders, among them a certain Gardaka, who buy the logs from the residents. The logs are, in turn, brought to the Dingalan town center. There, the logs are sold to the SNDC, he said.

Ed Pajeda, chair of the Anchor and Hope Action Group in Dingalan, said 1,000 families in Barangay Umiray at the boundary of Dingalan and General Nakar in Quezon were being given P2,000 each.

Condition

The amount was given on one condition: That every family wants its right to get 2,000 board feet of wood for rebuilding damaged homes.

A certain Henry of the SNDC was behind this scheme, Pajeda told the Inquirer, citing the reports of the affected families.

Rolando Calderon, SNDC forestry chief in Central Luzon and coordinator of the SNDC-NRDC inventory and retrieval committee, Aurora-Quezon project.

"Contrary to the report of Fr. Jandy Madrigal, all the logs are properly accounted for," Calderon said.

He said the inventories done in December and January accounted for the following logs found on shorelines and inland:

Aurora—uprooted trees, 7,596 pieces or 8,473.14 cubic meters; logs and branches, 90,500 cu. Quezon—uprooted trees, 11,571 pieces or 12,343.91 cu. logs and branches, 33,277.25 cu. Bicolano, 1,228 pieces or 46,800 board feet.

As of Feb. 21, Calderon said the SNDC-NRDC team had retrieved 4,681 pieces or 3,365.36 cu in Aurora and 671 pieces or 665.15 cu in Quezon.

He said the retrieval operations were still ongoing, but the process was slower in Quezon.

Towing the logs to Dingalan, some 100 km north of General Nakar, was hampered by strong waves, he said.

Calderon defended Kasibu, saying it was the "only logistician sawmill operated" in Real, Quezon.

Reports received by Evangelio said Kasibu is based in Imbodo and is owned by a military official.

Calderon clarified that NRDC was in charge of retrieval along the shorelines.

The local government, on the other hand, are responsible for the drifted logs in rivers and other inland water bodies.

Ex-NPA rebs suspects in slaying of student in Negros Occidental

BACOLOD CITY – Alleged members of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army were believed to be behind the killing of a student and wounding of two others in Talisay City, Negros Occidental, last Friday.

Vincent Rivera, 20, died from two bullet wounds after he and his companions were fired upon by armed men in Sitio Calabasan 2, Barangay Cansumpton, Talisay, about 7.5 km north of here.

His two companions were also wounded. They were Christo Pearl and Jerry Amador.

Senior Supt. Charlie Cabrera, Negros Occidental provincial police director, said eyewitnesses told the police that NPA rebels members operating in Talisay City were behind the attack.

NPA-affiliated national committee Cetapadi Leaflet said they were already investigating the attack and were coordinating with Cabrera and Jose Maria Sison, lead monitoring team leader of the Joint Elaboration Monitoring Committee.

The JEMC has been tasked with supervising the four-year-old peace agreement signed between the government and the RPA-NPA and to political wing—Bitelukayonsyong Demokratiko ng Mamamayang Pilipino.

Police investigators learned that Rivera, Pearle and Amador were riding a motorcycle when they were flagged down by a group of armed men at about 2:30 a.m. on Feb. 10 in Sitio Catamsan 2.

But Rivera, who was driving the motorcycle, sped off, apparently out of fear for their safety, said Chief Insp. Jerry Bartolome, Talisay City police chief.

After passing 50 meters from the first group of armed men who had flagged them down, Rivera and his two companions were fired upon by another group of unidentified persons, Bartolome said.

Marcos suffered two gunshot wounds in his chest. He had also pierced his body and his Pearle in the left shoulder, said Galicia.

Amadeo suffered only minor contusions in different parts of his body. He, however, was still in a state of shock as of yesterday, said Bartolome.

He said he was coordinating with Talisay's executive service in the Labor against the perpetrators although they planned to file murder and frustrated murder charges against the gunmen. Cathrin Gamon, PDI Visayas Bureau

Senator proposes to tax text messages P1 more for education

MALOLOS CITY—It's another tax proposal but this, Richard Gordon says, the one makes a difference because people will know where their taxes are going.

Gordon, during a press conference at the Bagong Country Club here on Friday, said he has drafted the Philippine Education Revitalization Act that will focus on solving the country's education-related problems.

Under his proposal, another P1 will be added to the cost of sending text messages through mobile phones. This revenue, Gordon said, will go to a special fund that can be tapped by the Department of Education.

He said the proposal, which he called "educational text" or "text for education," also includes the creation of an advisory body to help the DepEd determine priority needs.

"Education is in disarray but no one is studying it. We are not focused. We keep on talking about the problems but we don't do anything about them," he said.

Gordon said an average of 300 million text messages amounting to P300 million are sent in the country daily. In a year, this could amount to P110 billion, he said.

Gordon said if the tax measure is passed, new messages are expected to go down to around 200 million, but he will not affect the amount to be generated because the cost of sending messages will be higher.

He said the Education body would be asked to issue regular reports on its income, disbursements and on cities where the money generated was spent.

"Until 10 billion more is made by everyone. Imagine what P12 billion could do for education," Gordon said.

He said the country lacks at least 50,000 classrooms, 40,000 teachers and more than 10,000 textbooks.

Because of the lack of classrooms, it is not unusual for 70 students to be cramped in a small classroom, he said.

Gordon also said many of the country's teachers are unqualified and the contributions to the national development aggravating the problem in the education sector.

"How can a student study in a cramped and noisy classroom, if he has no food, if there are no chairs/desks, no books, no blackboards, and if the teacher is unqualified?" he asked.

He said he was hoping that through additional funds for education, students in public elementary and high schools would be provided with free food and books.

"Their children will go to school. And we still have lower graduates 10 to 20 years from now. This is telling the world that we are back," he said.

Aside from scholarships, Gordon also plans to sponsor bills that will increase the salaries of nurses, doctors and teachers. Dennis Estemadio, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Intensity 5.2 quake felt in Masbate, Bicol areas

LEGAZPI CITY – An intensity 5.2 tectonic earthquake occurred near the vicinity of Masbate province at around 11:33 a.m. yesterday.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) here said the epicenter of the earthquake was located 68 kilometers south and 48 degrees east of the main island of Masbate.

Resident volcanologist Edmundo Laguerta said the movement of the Masbate area could be the possible source of the shallow earthquake.

Intensity 4 was felt at Masbate City while Legazpi City in Albay, Iriga City in Camarines Sur, Naga City in Camarines Sur, Sorsogon City in Cagsa and Catanduanes, Quezon, recorded 3. Intensity 2 was felt in Lucban, Quezon and intensity 1 at Cagsa, Tiaong and Dolores.

Laguerta said they were not expecting the earthquake to generate aftershocks.

No tsunami warnings were issued although the epicenter of the said tremor was under water.

A tsunami generated by one of the world's strongest earthquakes off Sumatra has killed hundreds of thousands of people in countries in South Asia. Joel H. Bocatcon and Lee Martin B. Sanson, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ENTERTAINMENT

Edna Louie C. Camino
Assistant Editor Brenda G. Velarde

'Pelikula at Lipunan' reels off

"SHOOSPEED"

INDEPENDENT filmmaker Oriol Gamboa's "Shoot" opens the 12th edition of "Pelikula at Lipunan," starting today at the Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

The movie documents the lives of three boys locked up in prison with hardened criminals.

The vivacious boys of 'Bora'

GRETHER OCAMPO as Dinay

CARLOS AGASSI as Corey

PHOTO: Pinoy idol Gretchen Ocampo, Carlos Agassi, Bernard Palanca and Jericho Rosales, collectively known as The Hunks, now have their very own sitcom—ABS-CBN's "Bora" (Note: of the Beach).

Pedro plays PJ, owner of Krakuna Joe, the group's watering hole. Jericho is his cousin Alex, a happy-go-lucky guy who goes for varied women.

Smitten is Dinay, a Japinay who works in a dive shop. He is the playboy here, but one who loses his bravado when it comes to Matilda girls. Working with him at the shop is Carlos as Corey, a body-building addict who's slow in the head and, it's been the butt of jokes. Bernard is Lando, the dive shop assistant manager. He has banished to the island as a punishment, only to find heaven there more than hell.

Joining The Hunks are Isak Marasigan, Roderick Paulate, Soren Padilla, Cristhian Arao, Ginjoy Marques, Cristal Sanchez and their fellow Star Magic artists Prudence Lucas, Ina Ramores, Jaymee Joaquin, Jayvi Jiz, Mickie Joy Hyatt and Berrocoy.

"Bora" is written by Jury Boria and directed by Johnny Manahan.

BERNARD PALANCA as Lando

PEDRO PINGCUAL as PJ, Jericho Rosales as Alex

LUIS MANCIANG should be a 'Hunk'

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday, February 23, 2005

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Text threats force tighter security at ports in Mindanao

TUBOD, Lanao del Norte—Security has been tightened at both ends of a ferry route that plies Panguil Bay between Misamis Occidental and Lanao del Norte following a warning that circulated through text messages that these ports will be the next target of attack.

Of particular concern is the ferry port of Mukas village of Kolambugan town in Lanao del Norte and the port in Ozamiz City.

According to Lanao del Norte Gov. Imelda Dimaporo, she ordered increased security measures in the Mukas port because of a barrage of text messages carrying the warning that came to her attention.

The text messages circulated beginning Feb. 18.

As the working week opened Monday, traffic of goods and people across the narrow bay continues to be brisk amid increased police presence at the Mukas port.

"I don't want to take chances. What if the warning proves to be true?" said Dimaporo, expressing confidence that the heightened alert and greater security are enough to deter any planned attack.

Over the weekend in Ozamiz City, security was also tightened in the port, obviously to complement the measures adopted in Lanao del Norte.

The warning against a terrorist attack on the ferry service came in the run-up to the fifth anniversary of a ferryboat bombing that killed 39 people, injured 41 and left about 10 unidentified charred remains buried in a public cemetery in Ozamiz City.

The incendiary bombs exploded inside two Super 5 Transit buses aboard the ferry M/V Our Lady of Mediatrix (now renamed M/V Swallow 2) as it was about to dock in the Ozamiz City port in the afternoon of Feb. 25, 2000. A third bomb exploded an hour later in Ritai town of Zamboanga del Norte inside another Super 5 Transit bus aboard a ferryboat from Lanao del Norte.

Investigators have established that the bombs were planted while the ferryboat was still loading passengers and vehicles at the Mukas port.

The privately-owned ferry service employs four ferryboats and operates from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day. Some 2,000 vehicles and around 5,000 people cross the narrow bay through this ferry service daily. *Ryan D. Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Police arrest men

DUMAGUETE CITY—A group of intelligence personnel arrested on Monday three members of the "Deathrow" gang, a newly formed group allegedly involved in hold-ups and killings here.

Negros Oriental police director Senior Supt. Mauricio del Mar said Angelo Apostol, 19, and two minors aged 16 and 17 were arrested in Barangay Tinago by Task Force 24, whose members belonged to different intelligence units of the military, police and the National Bureau of Investigation.

Del Mar said the three killed street vendor Dennis Mazongas on Sunday. *Romy G. Amurao, PDI Visayas Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Fake medicines seized

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Police on Monday reported seizing a cargo of suspected fake medicines found in a truck and two houses in Tarlac City on Saturday. Personnel of the Bureau of Food and Drugs on Monday began the inventory of the contraband, said Dr. Juvencio Ordoña, chief of the Department of Health in Central Luzon. Senior Insp. Rolf de Guzman, acting Tarlac City police director, said the cargo belonged to a certain Peter Guevarra who was arrested last week in a raid here. Police blocked the truck as it entered the house at the Capitol Gardens subdivision in Tarlac City. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Trader slain in Tarlac

GERONA, Tarlac—A businessman was gunned down in Barangay Poblacion I here on Monday morning. Rogelio Ong, 56, was shot six times in different parts of the body while he was on his way to Paniqui town to deposit the earnings of his gasoline station and a cement distribution firm. Police said the two suspects, who were riding a motorcycle, took Ong's P200,000 cash. SPO3 Antonio Sagabaen, case investigator, said the robbery was planned because the suspects knew that Ong was carrying a large amount of money and knew his schedule that day. *Ronald Ulron, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Marijuana uprooted

SUGPON, Ilocos Sur—Policemen uprooted P6.1 million worth of marijuana in eight plantations near the boundary of Ilocos Sur and Benguet on Feb. 17. Reports here said the plantations were located in Sitio Nacneng in Barangay Casayan and near the town's boundary with Bakun and Kiburgan towns in Benguet. Senior Supt. Mario Subagan, Ilocos Sur police director, said at least 30,000 fully grown marijuana plants were planted in the area. *Leoncio Bahia Jr., PDI North ern Luzon Bureau*

2 village execs killed

BALANGA CITY—A former barangay captain and a village council member in Dinalupihan town were gunned down on Saturday. Police identified the victims as Lucio Belayo, former barangay captain of Tabo-Tabo, and Joey Abraham, 28, council member in the same village. Supt. Hernando Zafra, Bataan police director, said the lone gunman, believed to be a member of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan, used a .45-cal. pistol in the attack. Belayo and Abraham, police said, had just alighted from a bus after attending a meeting with military officials in Barangay Pinulot when they were shot. *Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Book on land conservation

A BOOK that highlights the five-year cooperation between the Philippines and Australia in land conservation was launched at the Australian Embassy, according to a news release. "Landcare in the Philippines—Stories of People and Places" tells of success stories from some of the 8,000 farmers in over 600 community groups in Mindanao involved in land conservation using the Landcare approach. They are participants in a five-year project funded by the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), in cooperation with the World Agroforestry (ICRAF). The Landcare approach to preventing soil erosion, which is popularly used in Australia, integrates conservation efforts of community groups, institutional networks and the government. The approach focuses on overcoming problems such as soil erosion and soil acidity.

Poro Point emerging as N. Luzon tourist spot

By Peter Le. Julian
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN FERNANDO CITY—The planned Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone (PPSEZ) is slowly but surely shaping up and, as envisioned, may become Northern Luzon's best tourist, recreational and commercial destination.

As if this was stressed last Tuesday Pennsylvania Avenue was unusually bright in the early evening after the ceremonial switch-on of street lights on the 3.2-kilometer thoroughfare that leads to the PPSEZ.

The switch-on ceremonies were attended by local officials led by Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, heads of regional government offices, and executives of the Poro Point Management Corp. (PPMC).

Cost

Put up at a cost of P260,000, the thoroughfare is lit up by 21 Luminaire bulbs each mounted on a wooden post. It was a joint project with the San Fernando City government, which will provide maintenance funds and foot the electric bills.

The street lighting was one of several projects undertaken by the PPMC since the middle of 2004. PPMC was created in 2003 out of the John Hay Poro Point Development Corp. for a more focused direction and promotion of the 236.6-hectare economic zone.

Lawyer Juanito Antonio, PPMC president and chief operating officer, said the Bases Conversion Development Authority released last year P100 million for the development of the planned Poro Point tourism, recreational and commercial complex and the San Fernando Airport.

Misuari denies ordering men to attack Army

Sulu folk call for speedy trial for Nur

JOLO, Sulu—A multisectoral group calling itself the Concerned Citizens of Sulu (CCS) has called for a speedy trial for Moro leader Nur Misuari, who has been in jail on charges of rebellion.

Misuari has been detained in Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna since Oct. 7, 2002 after Malaysian authorities arrested him while he fled to Sandakan, Malaysia at the height of violence instigated by his followers in Zamboanga City.

But since his arrest, Misuari's case has not progressed much.

The government said it was delaying resolving its case—both the dismissal of the charges against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chieftain, but as of late, only petitions for the transfer of the venue of the hearing were moving.

The most recent development in the case is a series of petitions asking the justice department to transfer the venue of Misuari's trial to Jolo.

According to the CCS, a congregation of human rights organizations, professionals, religious, educational, civic, business and youth leaders advocating peace, justice, equality and harmony, Misuari has a right to speedy trial.

Its appeal was contained in a resolution dated Dec. 4 and addressed to President Macapagal-Arroyo. The Office of the President received it only on Feb. 2, it was learned.

Tilla Ucona, one of the signatories and vice chairman of Concerns, said he chose Saad Usman as spiritual of his Freedom gained by the Constitution and that the Moro leader had already "suffered immeasurably."

Misuari, however, denied that he had the right to a "speedy, impartial and public trial."

Authorities have cited the detained Mr Misuari's release as the main reason for the recent gun battles that erupted between the military and the so-called Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG) in Patikul, Sulu.

Rafiq Abdik, who reportedly led the attacks, has denied that Misuari ordered the offensive.

The number of MNLF-turned MBG have resulted in the fighting said the massacre of a family in Jolo's Barangay Kan-Pungol in Bhanbang town on Feb. 7, was only one of a series of alleged military abuses against civilians in the remote areas.

He said the abuses and Misuari's long incarceration had prompted them to deliver a "wake-up call" to the government.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, PBI Mindanao Bureau

"The most important thing is for the MNLF to maintain its role as the chief defenders and champion of peace in our homeland Mindanao," he said concludes."

He concluded the letter thus: "My love to all of you."

There was no specific reference to the months-old fighting in Sulu.

Brother Ali Misuari was an order the MNLF leader's release.

A copy of Misuari's appeal for peace was given by Abdullah and company to Dr Nemesia to a hand meeting at the House on Monday evening.

Chiallam and his party were accompanied to the Senator's office by businessmen Colonel Mosaic, who was recently named member of the board of directors of the Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp.

'Please do your best'

Misuari also sent Dr Nemesia a handwritten letter endorsing Chiallam to "augment your effort to prevent the spread of the war in Jolo to the mainland Mindanao."

"You are authorize him and his companions to go around Mindanao to present the MNLF forces from getting embroiled in the war," Misuari told the Senator in the letter also dated Feb. 19.

"I'd like to reiterate my request (for) your effort to investigate the root causes of the sudden outbreak of hostilities between the AFP and the MNLF forces with a view to the immediate cessation of the hostilities so that we can help in Jolo for us Muslims as well," he said.

Quoting "the latest report," Misuari said "people in Mindanao are getting restless and are preparing to get involved in the conflict."

"Please do your best to prevent any further threat to peace in the region," he told Dr Nemesia.

Misuari gave the members of the special committee a copy of his letter to Arroyo in which he made no comment during the hearing.

Dr Nemesia said he had received Misuari's letter from the latter's wife Tarhata and MNLF commanders. *With a report from Cynthia Balana*

No money, no national ID, say lawmakers

Transcription of the first column:

not automatic. "The executive branch makes that activity in its budget request. The moment proposal, Congress approves," Andaya said.

Party-list Rep. Teodoro Casiño (Bayan) Monday and Monday that the Philippines could not afford at least P1.6 billion if the government were to issue a digitized card for every Filipino aged 18 to 65.

Cost-effective

Senators Edgardo Angara and Rodolfo Lacson yesterday demanded Casiño's sources that the government would have to spend a whopping P1.6 billion to provide every Filipino with a digitized ID card.

Angara and Lacson, who are at odds with each other, said in separate interviews that a single multipurpose ID card would appear to be cost-effective for people in their private and public transactions.

"What's his basis for coming up with a figure of P1.6 billion?" Lacson, who has filed a bill proposing a national ID system, asked reporters in reference to Casiño's statement. "There's no basis at all."

Angara said Casiño's estimate was small compared with the P5 billion being spent for clustering the same 32 cards such as driver's license and Social Security System and government service to income system cards.

"Just imagine how much money we are spending just to get a [driver's] license, a bank clearance, a passport, a driver's license, SSS card and GSIS card. That probably would cost P5 billion and expenses.

Impeachable offense

Unlimited City Justice Solicitor General Frank Chavez has warned that implementing an ID system at the provincial or national level is an impeachable offense.

Chavez said Congress' members would be breaking an interpose on grounds if they pass an act issues implementing a provincial ID system, and Chavez who was in Bicol visited City on Monday to attend a City Hall meeting.

Chavez said there was no law authorizing the President to implement an ID system even at the local level. "We are a government of laws and not of men," he point out said.

Mr Arroyo on Thursday asked provincial board members to adopt a provincial identification system while they were assisting Congress to pass the anti-terrorism law.

"Because one of the tools of terrorism is anonymity and mobility.

with an ID system, we can deprive them of anonymity and mobility," Mr Arroyo told the 72th National Convention of Provincial Board Members held at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, Cebu City.

Invasion of privacy

Chavez said that if an ID system were implemented, he would question it before the Supreme Court because it would amount to an invasion of privacy.

He pointed out that the Philippines had a martial down an executive order issued by former President Fidel Ramos creating an ID system.

"I am absolutely and vocally against a national ID system, especially if it is to be included in our constitution. Whatever we have in regard to centralize," he said.

Romeo Baldevarona, acting chief of the Commission on Human Rights in Negros Occidental, said he was opposed to an ID system because it would affect the right to privacy in violation of the human rights and of the Constitution.

"I do not believe an ID system would put a stop to terrorism," he said.

Local cores for ID system

The League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) are expected to pass resolutions endorsing supporting the implementation of the national ID system.

Rebel Eric Aries Amemiendo, president of the two organizations, said they had based on his constituents' request.

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Ulap and LPP would have the implementation of the ID system.

He said he would call separate meetings with the LPP secretariat and the board and the Ulap board of directors in mid-March to discuss the issue.

Ulap is composed of the officers of league of governors, vice governors, city mayors, city vice mayors, municipal mayors, municipal board members, councilors and barangay captains.

Warrantless arrests

In the House of Representatives, three members of party-list organizations claim that the proposed national ID system was meant to build dossiers against members of the opposition and to effect warrantless arrests.

Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza said the system would constitute on a person's right to privacy and defeat the presumption of innocence of an individual.

She said an individual who failed to register for ID could be considered a fugitive from justice or committed by committing offenses.

Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano said the ID system would not help thwart terrorism but would encourage warrantless arrests and intensify surveillance.

For her part, Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros urged Malacañang to set aside more funds for education.

"Instead of the government spending millions of dollars to create identification cards, it should put such and every P1 piles find in institutions of learning," Hontiveros said.

The deputy Minister Secretary Angelo Reyes and House Secretary Ignacio Bunyi for assuming that those who opposed the proposed "have something to hide."

They noted that it was during the term of Reyes as Armed Forces chief of staff and defense secretary that failed intelligence work and reckless military assaults had taken place.

Safeguards

Butler blasted the national ID system as the "Big Brother" only imposed by schools and offices.

"These guidelines were adopted for the purpose of studies and proposed to ensure that persons who enter [schools and offices] are duly recognized for the ID," Reyes said.

Reyes assured that the national ID system would have safeguards in place to address the legitimate concerns raised by the Supreme Court.

Separate measures

St. Ferran City Rivan Heavenly Leader and Center City Rep. Pete Rivan said Congress could separate should tackle the antiterror and the national ID bills separately because the objectives of the two measures "are very distinct."

Bagong Bayan Rep. Satur Ocampo said he was also opposed to the national ID system because it would encourage corruption in government and intelligence agencies with the legal platform to track down, identify and neutralize suspected terrorists.

He said the national ID system was "only a comprehensive identification system, which is useful for doing transactions with the government."

But Bagong Bayan admitted that the national ID system could also be used by authorities to help them in the antiterror and anti-terror campaign.

Antiterror database

He said a national ID system would provide authorities "a wealth of information," which may be necessary in building a nationwide antiterror database.

"The ID system will make it easier for the government to track criminals because it will become nearly impossible for them to be using false identities while moving from one place to another," Magsaysay said. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana and Ed Gabo; Gregor Jr. in Manila, Carla P. Gloria and Jhanna Papadimatas, INQ Visayas Bureau; and Anthony S. Mada, INQ Mindanao Bureau*

No Presidential Medal of Merit for FPJ, after all

purchasing awards to family members of the nominees Chairman Carmen (for music) and of stage director Lucinda Amador (for theater) in a ceremony at the Bicol Sofitel in Malacañang.

The award was received for Carmen by his son, Dr Carl Carmen, and for Amador by her brother, lawyer Antonio Rebadiz.

Carlo Caparas Alvarez, presidential adviser on culture and arts, offered the award to Poe's family during his solo last December.

Request for process

Yesterday Alvarez said in public that's exclusion by saying that the actor had already been nominated by the Philippine Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (Famas) and the Movie Workers Welfare Fund (Mowelfund) for the Session Artist Award in 2006.

"The President request the process," she said.

Alvarez said she had raised the idea of conferring on the late Presidential Medal of Merit only because his supporters seemed him to be immediately conferred the National Artist Award.

She said conferring on Poe the National Artist Award was impossible at that time because it was governed by a process of nomination and selection.

Alvarez pointed out that some

But supporters had rejected the presidential medal and put "political color" in Ms Arroyo's desire to honor "the King" of Philippine movies and the chief rival in the May 2004 presidential election.

"When an award is given, it must be accepted," Alvarez said.

As huge crowds of fans and supporters of Poe lined the streets outside the Malacañang Palace to pay their last respects to the late actor, Mrs Arroyo declared a national holiday on the day of Poe's funeral.

But Poe's famous supporters ignored the gesture. A number of them cut free in a wreath sent by Ms Arroyo.

'They deserved it'

Alvarez admitted that the political rift created by the latter rival between the camps of Ms Arroyo and Poe had "divided the people."

"But they deserved it," she said.

But she insisted that Ms Arroyo was not denying Poe any award.

She said the Presidential Medal of Merit was given to Carmen and Amador because they deserved it.

"We want to have an Oscars and more awards. They deserve their own moment of glory because if we have FPJ, they will be overshadowed," she said.

According to Alvarez, Poe is already being honored by his peers and the industry and is receiving recognition as a national artist.

"So how can they refuse to bring down recognition?" she said.

A HIGHER AUTHORITY
Director General Edgar Aglipay (left) watches Thailand's Prayut with National Capital Region police chief/Director Avelino Razon, Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Balaoing (2nd and 3rd from left) and other officers during Mass in Manila

Intelligence cop on stakeout killed

By Tarra T. Quismundo

INGLORIOUS ended the four Quispe record on Monday afternoon, when Antonio Arnaiz was with four other intelligence officers on a surveillance operation when shelter struck him down.

It was at about 3 p.m., while the heroes were making out against members of a robbery gang, when he passed away.

Suddenly, Arnaiz fell and struggled for breath while he had on Recto Street, a side street behind Quiapo Market near the bank of the Pasig River.

Bullet in the side

A bullet had pierced his left arm and punctured his left side.

The 47-year-old member of the Western Police District Police Intelligence Unit (WPD) died on the way to the hospital, ending his 20-year career in law enforcement.

"The assailants may have recognized the policemen through the street [informant] who was with them. Somehow, we rely. (They were) beaten to the draw," said Senior Insp. Dominador Arevalo Jr., WPD Homicide Section chief.

SUSPECTS. SPO1 Reynold Bulgarin, SPO2 Danilo Javier, PO3 Emmanuel Lukenyo and PO2 Gualberto Tan were in Quiapo shortly after hands the other day for a surveillance operation, a pre-operation report of the DPIE indicated.

In plain clothes, the men took positions on Quezon Boulevard and Recto Street, guided by an informant who was also from the area, said Arevalo.

Suspects nearby

Arnaiz and Tan positioned themselves on Recto Street under Quezon Bridge, when their asset told them that the men they were looking for were close by.

But these suspects, one lawman only ordinary Band members other unidentified men, began shooting at the policemen.

Investigators have no evidence, whether the DPIU men returned fire.

"They hesitated into either for the robbers they were looking for, or are connected with the group. We would be undertaking operations to find the suspects, and we would use the SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics Unit) if we have to," said Arevalo.

Manhunt

Arnaiz's fellow DPIU men immediately conducted a manhunt around the crime scene, in search of the three men who escaped after killing the longtime policeman.

With the operations falling to bring in suspects, WPD Station 1 operatives and DPIE teams conducted another round of follow up operations at about 5 a.m. yesterday.

"We rounded up 10 men from the Recto and Quezon Boulevard areas, but none was eight of them are left detained," said Supt. Romulo Sapitula, Station 1's chief.

Sapitula said the eight men would undergo further investigation, as more checking would have to be done to verify whether the men were clear of any criminal charges.

"They had no identification papers, and no one could (vouch) for) their identities. We were on a pursuit either we were there this morning, and we were to be tested for police," Sapitula said over the phone yesterday.

Units involved

The Sta. Cruz theater would be coordinating with the WPD Homicide Section and the DPIU in investigating the killers, said Sapitula.

Paired with the DPIU in September last year, Arnaiz had served under the police unit's mapping unit in Camp Crame, the highest period unit in Recto, the WPD Station 1 and Task Force Galugad. The policeman from San Ramon Street, Tondo, left behind four children.

In October last year, another WPD policeman, PO2 Reynaldo Isadora, died while trying to apprehend a robber on Romualdez Street in Tondo, Manila. He was killed a few days after Supt. Rhonda Martinez, WPD Station 4 chief, was ambushed in Sta. Mesa and Sr. Insp. Emmanuel Sanchez was stabbed to death, with his wife in Pandacan City.

Jeep drivers fed up with long line

By Margaux C. Orea

RIDERS of the long lines.

A group of jeepney operators here vents forward and expressed support for the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's (MMDA) Clash-embedded traffic schemes.

"We are now gathering the necessary evidence supporting the MMDA's decision, especially the Metropolitan Traffic Ticket (MTT)," said Obet Martin, Pangkalahatang Tanggunian Member and Initiative Service Association Automobile, Inc. (Pasang Masda).

Martin said that since the MMDA revoked back to the Traffic Aides in Recto, scheme following the Makati Supreme Trial Court's issuance of a temporary restraining order, their drivers lose hour "senselessly complaining about the long lines at the agency's accomplishing centers."

"Motorists had no one here when the MTT was still in place," Martin said, adding that the streets goes from "convenience and freedom."

Martin also said that Pasang Masda had the support of nine Metro Manila jeepney federations included in the Congress of National Transport Operators Unite of The Philippines.

The jeepney operator also said that beginning next week, they would be pulling up strategies expressing support for the MMDA's MTT scheme on 20,000 of their jeepney units plying the metropolis.

The MTT was suspended after transport groups questioned its exact.

Cainta scores a round in mall row with Pasig

By Luige A. del Puerto

AT LEAST, some big room.

The Pasig City Regional Trial Court yesterday ordered Cainta and Pasig City to maintain the "status quo" in their boundary dispute over the property where the Sta. Lucia Mall stands.

"Considering the circumstances that issuance of a writ might result in violence among the parties, if the parties are hereby directed to observe a status quo until further order from this court," said the decision of Judge Esperanza Ribon Victorino of Branch 167.

Cainta has filed a motion to quash a notice of execution that the court issued early this month.

The motion that, for the meantime, Sta. Lucia Mall and its tenants would still have to go to the Cainta municipal hall to get a business permit and pay taxes.

"This is very welcome development," Cainta Mayor Meo Rogue said. "We hope it would be like this until this case is resolved."

Rogue said the order had eased tensions in the mall. Both local governments have already set up action centers in the commercial complex to the confusion of tenants.

Pasig City Mayor Vicente "Bobi" Escolino said this city would abide by the court order.

"I have not seen the order, but if the court has indeed issued that, we will follow it," he said. "We have no problem with that. We will follow what a court decreed."

Escolino added that Pasig City's "not in a hurry to get the revenues from the mall."

"It's not our (main) end (only). We are not in a hurry," Escolino said on the phone, referring to the taxes and business permit fees the mall pays to the Cainta local government.

Escolino maintained that the city is not just after the money.

"We are after what are believe is rightfully ours," he said. Pasig officials believe that the land where Sta. Lucia stands is within the city's boundaries.

Obando officials oppose mayor on Tanza dump

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TABOR top local officials may be against the operation of a controlled garbage facility in neighboring Navotas, but still will accommodate some of their garbage trucks in Obando, Bulacan, are striking their eye on the controversial facility.

He had heard about the idea but Navotas Mayor John Tiangco said he had not received any formal letter from Obando yet.

Just assume, he said the facility is in barangay Tanza (and) still accommodate Obando. "I don't see any problem with that," he added.

Obando Mayor Cedric Lee has go confirmed that some of the 11 barangay chairs in the town had signed a resolution asking him to negotiate with Navotas and the private operator of the facility for the possibility of Obando dumping its garbage in the facility.

The resolution will have to pass through the Obando municipal council for approval but Tiangco said he assumed strongly opposed to the facility—but hadn't cry during the last election.

"I'll wait for the council's action," he said. Other councilors are also against the facility.

Obando used to have open dumps but these had to close when Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act was passed in 2000.

Higinia Llantada; 87

HIGINIA Rivera Llantada died on Feb. 20. She was 87. She is survived by her children Joy and Delsie, Vicky and Hermie, Eleanor, Tony and Cornelio, and Bobby, grandchildren Marlon and Thomas, daughter-in-law Malou, and niece Mercedes E. Rita. Necrologist and friends request please

residence to pray for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in the Sto. Rito Parish Church, Palma Homes, Quezon City. Interment will be on Saturday, Feb. 26, at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Novaliches, Quezon City, after the 9 a.m. Mass.

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Lilia Rose G. Dipasupil
Assistant Editor Cristel B. Bico Jr.

MRT 3 to hike minimum fare to ₱10

By Cinchea S. Bacino

THE METRO Rail Transit 3 is to...dined to raise its minimum fare from ₱9.50 to ₱10 in a bid to ea...ecessary to raise subsidies...ropa of vending machines that...hard and brown out because of the existing fare scheme.

MRT 3 General Manager Roberto Lastimoso said the plan was to restructure and setup the 10 existing "stores" in the existing fare matrix.

The fare for the full month will stay at ₱15.

"The new fare scheme would be implemented once the transportation department approves the plan.

Lastimoso said the MRT 3 does not expect any additional revenues from the fare restructuring, but it could reduce the queuing in the ticket booths.

The railway system running from North Edsa to the Recto station on Taft Avenue, as well as the Light Rail Transit, have pending petitions for a ₱10 increase.

Lastimoso added that the MRT 3 should not have a hard time getting approval for the fare restructuring.

MRT 3 spokesperson Mariano Gui said the vending machines were not programmed to dispense loose change. "We have about 30 machines that were not utilized," he said, adding that the vending machines can absorb P1 million each.

Gui said there could be a ten percent increase in revenues because of the restructuring.

Lastimoso said the new scheme would result in base fare raises, but he would not elaborate since he did not have a copy of the proposed matrix.

The MRT 3 would have an estimated time implementing the P10 increase once it is approved. Lastimoso said the government was just waiting for an appropriate time to increase the railway fare.

Close to 400,000 commuters ride the MRT 3, LRT and LRT 2 everyday.

The MRT 3 alone carries an average of 420,000 passengers daily, and generates almost ₱2.28 mil...lion in monthly revenues.

But Lastimoso said the revenues were still P68 million short of what was needed to pay the monthly rental to Metro Pathway Transit Corp., the private consortium that built the MRT 3 and leased the facility to the government before transferring its ownership after 25 years.

Under the pending fare increase petition, the railway agency sought to increase the minimum fare to ₱16 for the first three stations.

For the succeeding three stations, each commuter would have to pay an additional ₱3, bringing the maximum fare from the current rate of ₱15 to ₱25.

Train authorities cited the increased costs of maintenance, particularly of electricity that runs the train systems.

Power accounts for about 30 percent of the railway system's operations.

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LEAD BY EXAMPLE

'Good' deed did not pay for policeman

By Edwart C. Tenio Jr.

HE SAID he just wanted to help.

Now SPO1 Samad Alfonso of the Northern Police District middle force is in hot water after he was accused of helping his friend, identified only as "Ryan," abduct a woman. Ryan allegedly raped the woman later.

The woman said Alfonso also took her cell phone, that while Alfonso is in jail, his alleged friend remains at large. Asked his version of the story, the policeman broke into tears as he denied the allegations. "I am not a criminal," he said.

The woman, owner of a binge house in Caloocan City, told police that Alfonso and Ryan forced her to get on a motorcycle about 1 a.m. on Saturday. Alfonso allegedly introduced himself as a Caloocan City policeman and warned to find out if her business was legal. But Alfonso dropped off Ryan and left at a resort in Barangay Bagong Barrio, the woman said.

According to Caloocan City Police investigator chief Napoleon Catacutan's report, Ryan allegedly raped the woman several times inside the hotel, switching only to cutoff shirts. The woman managed to escape at around 5 a.m. Monday. Later that morning, she reported the incident to the police.

Alfonso, for his part, said he first met Ryan in a casino. On Friday night, Ryan had asked him if he could patron his cell phone to the police because he had run out of money.

After agreeing, Alfonso took Ryan to his house, got money from his wife, and brought Ryan back to the casino. Later, Ryan asked for more money and told the policeman to take him to the motel to get the woman's cell phone. Ryan reportedly wanted to get back his phone and exchange it with the woman's phone. Alfonso drove Ryan to the motel but the woman was not there. Ryan again asked Alfonso to bring him to the woman's binge house where he found the woman and told her that Ryan was outside. About 5 a.m., Saturday, the two asked Alfonso to drive them back to the motel. The woman also gave Alfonso her phone, which he later brought to a pawnshop, the policeman said.

Faulty brakes hurt firemen on mission

By Marjoua C. Ortiz

TWO FIREMEN were hurt when the brakes on their fire truck malfunctioned as they were responding to a blaze in Makati City yesterday afternoon.

FO3 Bienvenido Tellada and SFO1 Wilfredo Bagayat sustained minor injuries after the brakes of the fire truck Tellada was driving failed, according to SFO1 Reynaldo Gonzales.

Gonzales said the firemen were on their way back to a burning apartment building at 7776 St. Paul St., San Antonio Village, after yielding from the main fire station when Tellada lost control of the fire truck.

Concrete post

The vehicle then rammed a concrete post on Yakal Street.

Tellada and Bagayat were brought to the Ospital ng Makati for treatment, Gonzales said.

The fire, which began at 12:30 p.m., engulfed inside a unit occupied by Rodeyn Ferrer, an Indian.

Gonzales said the five-story bare house caused by an unattended appliance unit.

The fire injured two other apartment units and partially damaged two others, destroying an estimated P2 million worth of property.

The fire bureau declared a fire out at 2:24 p.m., Gonzales said.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy B. Molmisa

BASKETBALL
NBA
—Raptors vs. Nets, 8:30 a.m. (5-8 p.m.) Solar Sports - Vince Carter faces his old Cardinal Sisters his old team when Allan Jumaji hosts Toronto.
(2) NCAA—Texas vs. Texas Tech, 9 a.m., 10:05 Game vs. UConn, 3:30 p.m. (c) ESPN—The Longhorns visit the Red Raiders in this Big Twelve duel as the Fighting Irish try to upset the Huskies.

Toms stop Maroons; Warriors gain semifinals /A26

Tigers, Lady Archers triumph /A27

Agassi advances in Dubai Open /A28

BUSYSMARTS asks leave off the round-by-winning three-straight rushes

Gabica stuns Reyes; Django easily gains

By Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

BEREN "Baras" Reyes' sweet run came crac. He was beaten by Antonio "Gago" Gabica last night.

Before the start of the Reyes-Fl. Ribbon All-Philippine Billiards Open, Reyes said he's weary of local players more than foreigners because of their intense desire to topple him at home.

It turned out he was right as Gabica, the reigning Philippine 9-Ball champion, blanked Reyes for five straight racks en route to a stunning 9-4 victory at the IBC 13 section in Quezon City.

Reyes' first defeat in no-games semi-finish starts in the table so. Knowledged-two nuances, including Jeremi Judd Francisco "Django" Bonnamaru, the world's No.1 bar joint.

Facing promising Jeffrey "Young Boss" de Luna, Pedro Antonio used his vast international experience to hack out a 9-6 victory in the afternoon games at the AMF Pagsit Billiard Hall in New Gumaca Mall Commonwealth branch in Quezon City.

"Gumpan talagas ang laro, mayroon (That's how the game goes, sometimes you lose)," said the 34-year-old bayo, the game's top (name) earner last year.

While admitting that he got lucky on the break, Gabica said he also felt confident that he could beat his godfather (Reyes) because he was having his down very well.

The elder relegated Reyes to the loser's side where he's slated to meet Jeven Allan today.

Gabica, who dumped another seeded player in Wilson Bustico (9-7) on the opening round Monday, will be facing the winner of the Lee Yuan Cortesia Rodolfo Luat match being held at press time.

After winning the leg (the first, Germano found Bonnamaru scored three consecutive racks to set the start of the lopsided match.

De Luna, the youngest qualifier at 20, rallied to outlast 3-2 only to watch Bonnamaru take the next two racks for a 5-2 edge.

Undaunted, De Luna, who got the Young Bata leg because of his ponyhunt for trick shots like his (6-0) brave, again closed it at 6-4.

A crowd's after a shot as the Sa-2 ball in the 11th rack, however, doomed De Luna's upset bid as Bonnamaru cleaned up the table and proceeded to seal the win.

"Mas konsentrang laro (Better focused)," said Bonnamaru, who will be facing Gabica next Saturday in the latter's home city.

Bonnamaru and De Luna might have lost, but super Sa-cause he will hacks practice and intensive total exposure.

Try and do it, Pacquiao admonishes Morales

By Recah Trinidad

IF ALL means, let him try and do it.

Manny Pacquiao would not help but exclaim in both amazement to give yesterday when told that Erik Morales has been ordered by his younger brother to jumpsuit, take the fight to his foe, and pressure the 10-time world boxing (subdue) in Las Vegas on March 19.

"Hah eh, mal, ha, ha. (They're greatly mistaken)," Pacquiao responded to a boxing writer when interviewed over the phone by the business from his $4,000 ($239,000) a-month appearance in Hollywood.

No, Pacquiao did not say it, but he clearly suggested it would be suicide on the part of Morales if he heeds the tip of his brother, bantamweight Diego Morales, ranked No. 1 contender by the WBC and No. 3 by the WBA.

It was the last place they should hear thoughts of, Pacquiao tried to explain.

"Erik should never remind Diego(sic)'s right side and press the action," Diego, a southpaw and former WBO super flyweight champ, had told Jose Lasso.

Without contrasting styles, experts believe Morales could enhance his chances against the exciting, hard-hitting Pacquiao if he emphasizes on his superiority and dignitarship.

In fact, Erik Morales had been saying that Pacquiao, whom he belittled as one-dimensional, may not be able to adapt to situations inside the ring.

It's also open knowledge that the greatest dimension in Pacquiao's raging bull style is his footwork. He thrives on out-in-out, dead-eye counterattacks.

This is the reason Pacquiao had doubted Morales would follow the advice of his sibling.

PACQUIAO is training: Mail shot

Marksman Mundo new commish

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE SENATE is confirmed as the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).

Jury Mundo, a veteran shooter and executive vice president of the Philippine National Shooting Association, took over as PSC commissioner yesterday replacing Mike Barredo.

"I still have to get myself acquainted with a lot of things," said the 56-year-old Mundo. "But among my priorities is sports development. We need to develop more sports that have medalist materials like athletics, swimming and shooting."

Barredo admitted the sudden administrative change caught him by surprise.

"I have done well in some assignments but

Tams stop Maroons; Warriors gain semis

By Mart Anthony Reyes

WITH just enough defensive stop in the endgame, defending champion Far Eastern University shunned University of the Philippines the chance with a 58-56 decision to gain a semifinal berth in the 3rd Collegiate Champions League at the FEU gym.

The Tamaraws forged ahead with still 46 seconds left and stayed on top for good by forcing the Maroons to miss three attempts in the final 22 seconds.

FEU then sealed a semifinal encounter with University of Visayas tomorrow at the Makati coliseum.

It will be University of the East against Philippine Christian University, the reigning NCAA champion, in the other semifinal duel after the Warriors dispatched of University of Perpetual help final, 75-59.

Mark Barkman shot 10 points and Ronjon Custodio added 10 as the Warriors scored their third straight victory after dipping past San Beda and University of Cebu.

Earl Sagkosdal added eight points and the same number of assists for the Warriors, who led by as much as 19 points, 54-35, in the third quarter.

RJ Rizada scored nine of his 17 points in the fourth quarter, including a three-point opening the period, while Jessick Miranda contributed 11 points for the Tamaraws.

"They held us up with a [defensive] step, so I told the boys that maybe we can step them also in preserve our load," said FEU coach Bert Flores. "It was hard to beat them so I guess the team with the better defense won."

While FEU failed to make a single score in the last 46 seconds, the Tamaraws gave the Maroons echoes of their own medicine by throwing a ball-court press that prevented their slim entering margin.

The Warriors easily dominated the tilt as in the 6-foot-4 freshmen, acquired from Jose Rizal University, and are not like a one-man team as he came out of UE, struggled to assert himself in the second quarter after a 20-20 tie at the end of the first period.

UE is slightly favored score marked miss Stanley Pace, which will miss semis Aris Dimitriou, who reportedly resigned to concentrate on his old job as University of Manila mentor.

The tournament is sponsored by Hotpoint, Mount Sublime, PCSO, Air21, adidas, Chooks-to and Diamond Laboratories.

The scores

First Game

FEU 58 – Barkman 10, Custodio 10, Sagkosdal 8, Pangilinan 8, Sagarino 6, Lingbaoan 5, Hernandez 4, Cacanando 3, Rapsing 2, Ramirez 1, Lazaro 0.

UPHSD 56 – Adkins 16, Lazaro 12, Bautista 6, Alba 5, Lazo 5, Pallancia 4, Villanueva 3, Agot 2, Gadia 2, Sagkosdal 0.

Quarters: 10-10, 20-20, 38-40, 75-59.

RJ RIZADA of Far Eastern makes his move against a UP defender in yesterday's game. — JOHN JOY

Second Game

UE 68 – Nunez 17, Jarin 12, Mariano 11, Manzano 8, Bautista 8, Pascual 5, Dela 3, Villanueva 3, Sanchez 0, Cabe-Dela 0.

AP 58 – Gonzalez 12, Santos 12, Ramos 12, Jay-A. Jose 11, Sharff 5, Reyes 3, Cabral 3, Sabio 2, Sagsagan 1, Crespo 0.

Quarters: 14-12, 29-25, 44-40, 68-58.

Taulava lawyer still at it

Bill Trodden doesn't seem to move the Philippine Basketball Association even one big move, but his lawyer continued to withdraw the league and the Department of Justice over the citizenship issue of his client.

"We doesn't want to create trouble," said lawyer Edmundo Hernandez. "We just wanna to protect his right as a Filipino."

The latest development had already ruled last year that Taulava inked his citizenship and recently came out with findings that certain people allegedly faked the papers of the 6'8 naturalized-born Filipino-born to gain eligibility to the PBA.

The controversy has turned into a long-drawn legal battle highlighted by Taulava's suspension and the forfeiture of a Talk 'N Text win during the finals of the Philippine Cup eventually won by Barangay Ginebra.

"We don't want to generate outspoken here," said Hernandez during the PBA forum sponsored by Red Bull, Superman and Dagupe. "He just wants to be given a chance to support his family and perhaps, play for the national team again."

Taulava's return supported by the PBA as one of six foreign-born players tabbed by the DOJ and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) as having no Filipino roots.

A Quezon City regional trial court had ordered the league to lift its suspension, claiming that Taulava has sufficient proof to back his claim of Filipino lineage, but PBA commissioner Noli Eala filed a motion for reconsideration.

The court denied the PBA appeal and Eala decided the case to the Court of Appeals (CA).

"I hope commissioner Eala would be man enough (the time to honor his word) should the CA upholds that his position," said Fruentes. "The last time, he was quoted as saying that he will abide by whatever is the court decision on the motion of reconsideration he filed. And yet the next thing we know he went to the CA when the motion was denied."

Fruentes said his client would likely seek a subpoena issued by senate Secretary Noel Gonzales for a preliminary investigation into Taulava's citizenship.

"We have yet to receive the summon but once we do, we'll address ourselves," said Taulava's lawyer. "Now you expect an impartial investigation when it starts the very beginning, Secretary Gonzales already judged Asi as not being Filipino."

Marksman Mundo new commish

[illegible] that is a surprise," said Buenida, who served as commissioner for three years.

He was interviewed only yesterday after most of the appointees of Mundo, who ranks next to Ignacio Bunagpaal, an elder brother of President Macapagal-Arroyo, in the shooting association.

"But I'm sure there's wisdom behind the President's decision," he added.

Buenida will stay on as chair of the Aerial Regulatory, a national sports event for differently abled athletes, which will also be held in Manila a week after the Southeast Asian Games.

Mundo joins a PSC roommate headed by officer in charge Butch Ramirez after Optimo quit his chairmanship to head the Games and Amusements Board earlier.

Although Mundo's appointment seemingly nine months before the SEA Games, the former Olympian just wanted.

"I had no hesitation in accepting the positions," said Mundo, who set a national record in the 50-meter rifle prone event in the 1992 Olympics. The feat earned him the first medallion of excellence from the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Mundo, an economics graduate at the University of the Philippines, admitted he didn't expect to be taking on a bigger role in Philippine sports.

"It's good that I'll be able to give something back to the country," he said.

No end in sight for billiards row

By Jeannine W. Pays

THE DEET thing the meeting officials of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines agree on is the need for an election.

Outside of that, there seemed to be no room for an amicable settlement.

BSCP president Jesse Sipalco and secretary general Joaquin Jesus de Ungle could not agree on the announced election procedures during the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) forum yesterday at the Manila Pavilion.

The issue is headed to the Philippine Olympic Committee for arbitration.

Sipalco would like to expand the membership of the board prior to an election, while Dr. Ungle insisted that the BSCP abide by its constitution which calls for only the existing board members to vote.

"We cannot change the rules in the middle of the game," said Dr. Ungle.

Sipalco is calling for a meeting on Feb. 26 to discuss the expansion of members. But any such holding of elections, Dee Cie Ungle, he said, has been unacceptable.

"The problem is lack of communication," said Sipalco, who has held the top BSCP post since 1992. "I've been trying to contact Kit de Ungle but he has been ignoring my calls and text messages. If there's something we found wrong but we could've talked it out. That's what I'm disappointed."

Ilarly reports pose that Dr. Ungle seems intimidated in taking over BSCP's top post. But he dismissed the insinuations.

"I want anything to be president," he said. "We have to have the election and if he's elected sorry."

Try and do it, Pacquiao . . .

Just the same, Pacquiao said all he could promise is do his very best for his countrymen and hope that he will do well on the night of the fight after he's finished with his other libations.

In trying his best, Pacquiao said he has completed over 60 rounds of sparring, sessions generally guided excellent by trainer Freddie Roach.

Pacquiao also hinted he has mastered to overcome a new weapon, his right cross.

Pacquiao also revealed that he has retained the services of his business manager, Bol Bautista, who was scheduled to meet with Shelly Finkel, only when the sensational southpaw from General Santos City signed a two-year contract last month.

Pacquiao personally trained Manano, who ironically has earlier thrash and chained him to one-sided defeat at the Los Angeles coliseum the other day.

The Ring Magazine featherweight boxing champion took Manano to the closest apartment a couple of blocks from the Wild Card Boxing Club on a reported hand $35,000 Lincoln Montgomery.

Pacquiao's new place, which has two big bedrooms, is not a lot rehab-sized to be with Maga Johnson.

There are four pool tables in the building.

Marksman Mundo new commish

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Naval, Lorenzo power NWTC's wushu romp

WINNING FORM: Changpuan gold medalist April Lim.

NAVAL Phils. Training Center's talented lists emerged overall champions in the first WFF Philcha Federation of Chinese Martial Arts national cup championships by bagging five gold and one other medals last Sunday at the WFF Center on Arlington Street, Manila.

Nine-year old Lorenzo Rand and 13-year-old April Lim sparked NWTC's campaign.

Rand, a member of the national junior team, ruled the 11-14 of Li Lu Second level event while Lim topped the 13-over youth Changquan competition.

The other NWTC gold medals came from Clemson Ian Jacob Changquan), Dexter Bautista (Nanquan), Jacob Nanquan) and Jacob Lim (Nanquan). Other Bautista (Changquan) and Jacob Lim (Nanquan).

More Than Medals' stars ranked second with one gold, three silvers and three bronzes, followed by EP (1 gold, 1 silver, 3 bronzes), Southern Baptist Village High School (1 gold, 1 silver), WFFA Jobs (1 gold, 1 silver) and Long Shan Athletic Association (1 gold, 1 bronze).

The unbeaten of the meet as pointed by WFF development committee director Leslie Ng seemed and sponsored by WFF president Asher Cornelio qualified for the national pool, which will soon undergo rigorous training in preparation for the Asian junior championships set to Singapore this July.

"I'm very happy with the results," said WFF honorary president Francis Chan, who joined the big coaches of athletes who made it to the morning pool.

You know how to save Luisito and the Pasig?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

DEED and to be precious second jewels.

But it's now easy to complain the dying Pasig, since the rise of dramas, exhausted, feeble-weary Luisito Espinosa, since our most celebrated world boxing champion.

There are ongoing efforts to revive, if not restore, them to their former glories.

For Luisito, who suffered another crushing devastation in the United States since the weekend, he will never be a champion again.

But he could be helped back to his feet to be surely once again, after being knocked out silly by unearthly pronouncements.

The Pasig, on the other hand, cannot be restored to its pristine past, but it could be saved from totally dying.

***

The must first.

There's the announcement that another major event is being staged to save the Pasig.

The event is the Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River.

It's not the first event of its nature to be held in support of the dying river.

Before it, there was the Pasig River Heritage Marathon and a host of such events which obviously did not serve their full purpose.

But this 42-km run, from five barangays in Pasi Boulevard, promises to be truly different, explains a Pasig! advocates have high intent for the run.

***

How could a running marathon save the Pasig?

The answer: "Easy in reception, one marathon was never an ordinary lessons, and every sporting activity. It has always been a hybrid of physical pursuits, environmental advocacy and historical relevance.

Even. Hans also could a differ from those failed marathons?

He adds: "By going international, the Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River has been accredited by both the US-based Association of International Marathoners and Road Runners (AIMS) and the International Association of Athletics. We therefore get the limelight of international road racers focused on us for one special time of the year. We have nothing to a select list where renowned international marathon events are regularly contested.

The result, we were told, is being spearheaded by former First Lady Amelita Ramos, chairperson of the Clean and Green Foundation Inc.

She does has got been set for said marathon.

But not to worry: "It was conceived by pure experience and organized one of pure love."

***

So who will stop Luisito Espinosa from getting the nuts of the Pasig and eventually killing himself?

Definitely not the kind-hearted commissioner out there in California that could not care less if a helpless, defenseless, down-on-his-luck former national treasure gets pounded by younger foes at bogging for a few dollars inside the ring.

Luisito is not only over the hill. He's not only a washed-up bum.

He's lost, desperate, devastated. But the poor guy could not help it.

He keeps punishing out there. Oh, he does not know anymore what he's doing.

But he'd rather get down-fisted, again and again and again, he'd rather die-dive by brutally-rather than see his three lovely kids go hungry.

***

You know what?

There are people who could stop Luisito from surely and slowly annihilating himself.

For example, Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Bonifacio Cruz could put on her feet, do her job, and stop raining on the Filipinos easy, which has gathered dust in his desk these past six years.

The case stemmed from the non-payment of Luisito's $150,000 purse for his title defense in Barcelona, South Catalonia, during the reign of Fidel Ramos.

So far the case itself has stayed to rest, no thanks to the assigned judge who has obviously forgotten what justice is all about.

Based on the merits of the case, the three heads of the Games and Amusements Board commissioned an unforgettable day when his allowed Espinosa to fight with the purses still unsettled.

But the full blame falls on former South Cotabato Gov. Larry de Rubio and Rod Nazario, the hired promoters in the Barcelona fight and the Cotabato bout.

These two should stop running away. They owe Espinosa.

In fact, Shamsi Dicquiano's promoter, Murad Muhammad, had openly advised Nazario to settle his debt to Espinosa the moment he's able to collect his own Pacquiao's monumental March 19 outing in Las Vegas.

That's the only decent thing to do. Murad was quoted as having advised his partner in from Pacquiao.

But Nazario, either obviously forgotten what decency is all about in the case of the defeated, chained Luisito Espinosa.

The deserved Ring of our division has a better chance of surviving.

Solid shot for Manila Southwoods this time

By Mayang B. Castillo

SOUTHWOODS knows that winning the season title at the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf championships is like "holding for the team."

The team has a better chance at showing down the stars, though, in metal-spikes.

"The lineups for the team's divisional tournament is even," Southwoods' Jovic Hechanova said, a day minutes before flying to Bacolod together with the entire team yesterday.

"Winning the senior championship is like ask-ing for the moon," Hechanova added. "We're looking at pulling off another surprise like last year. It's the team's division, though we hope to pull off the way this time."

A team built around the flamboyant American Marshall and reigning Singapore Amateur champion Michael Khan guards a first-title team jinx.

Southwoods, which last won in 1999 when powerhouses Cockfighting and Manila were absent, looks ready to go all the way this time with its roaring stars now armed with four elite gamers.

And Hechanova feels the team has learned a bitter lesson from its final-round collapse last year in Cagayan de Oro that allowed longshot Del Monte to escape with the championship.

Seven downs going into the final day, Southwoods went four up with five holes to play only to lose seven and finish second.

"Our players are young, but they've matured, since," said Hechanova. "That's why I feel we have a good chance of winning, because a player plays only two days and it's easier to get two good days that four from one (player)."

Though Southwoods still be running one-two-in-10-year-old Toro Nakajima, the team is teeming with youthful talent with Gene Sandoz, Jun-Jun Rana, Jonnavie, Mike Ko, Laurence Magpale, Jong Lapus and Danilo Asinio as the rosters.

Teams for the meet's tournament stop each field 10 players with each player seeing action for 36 holes. Only the top four scores from five players count toward the team aggregate per day.

Manila Bankers, Bay Ridge, Heroes de los Baños, San Onofre, Dyes Chang, Cruz Bendijo, Subic Mimosa and rookies Pedrito Mendoza make up the Southwoods crown squad.

SPORTSWATCH

Best of the Best darts tilt up

PNCC's month-P75,000 tune up for grabs in the "Best of the Best" darts league starting this Thursday at the Amber's Bar Restaurant on Emilia corner Polaris in Libertad. It's Makati Pitchmen after The defunct Metro Manila Inter-Club. The event will feature teams composed of six members each and last-man-standard players and will be held every Thursday. Teams can battle a maximum of six players, with an entry fee of P1,000. Aside from cash prizes, trophies, medals and certificates will also be awarded for the top teams in the tourney supported by Sun Microsport Corp. and Nation Golf. The best individual player will win a motorbike bike courtesy of Toby's Sports. For inquiries, call Amber's Bar at 5218855 and 4581784.

Retaural tops Region I chess stints

WILLIAM Retaural stunned top seed Michael Sosa of Rizal Norte in the eighth and final round Sunday night to win the Region I edition of the national standard chess championship at the Laoag City Hall. The No. 8-seed Retaural, the pride of Barangay City, finished with 7 points to score 2½ wins and advance to the national leg of the tournament slated in Manila in May to select the members of the national team vying in the Southeast Asian Games on Nov. 27 to Dec. 5. Second seed Edmundo Ferrer of Tondo, Manila, downed No. 3 John John Mendoza of Bangued to finish second with 6½ points, five more ranked third and fellow Gabriel Dan Fernando City, La Union, and 11th seed Pancho Reyes of Baguio City. The trio received P5,000 each. Melvin Bacarisas, Contributor

STREETBALL CHALLENGE: The staging of the Nike adidas 3-on-3 Streetball Challenge received a boost when adidas Philippines Inc. inked a deal with brand Pilot, the marketing and distributing arm of Charter PGH, the multivitamin which helps in promoting muscle/weight-building nutrients. The deal includes the sponsorship of the "Charter PGH Height Matters Shot Blocking Contest." Managing of the Charter Big Man's Camp as well as jerseys for the winning teams of the regional, national and All-Star finals. Adidas-Philippines president and managing director John P. Alonzo (center), marketing director Angelica P. Sunga (right), deputy chief financial officer Joel Orosa (right, standing), and sports marketing manager Goody Custodio (left, standing) signed the deal with brand/president Bob Segovia and product manager Tom Manuwa. Big Man's Camp instructor Jeff Flowers and Coca-Philippines CEO Jocelyn Domingo.

Wide-open race in GCAP derby tonight

ANOTHER banner crowd is expected tonight at the Las Piñas Coliseum when the championship round of the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 7-Cock Derby gets under way at 7 p.m. with Pagsuyan Gamefowl's 3000 as sponsor. A wide-open race for the derby crown, 27 qualifiers is expected since only three entries—ATWO'S 3A Lumpia of William So, MBE, 3P of Tony Lazola and Dandelion 3000 of Patrick Antonio — posted three wins in last Monday's elimination round. Meanwhile, the much-awaited special 3-cock derby on Saturday will feature more than 50 cocks as the sponsorship of Pagsuyan Gamefowl Farm's Pendiunan Coliseum manager Alex Tolosa and 10 Mamanuk said each participant will get P2,000 in cash as rebuttals from 10 Mamanuk. For inquiries, call (02) 8948 and 8478.

UAAP BADMINTON

Tigers, Lady Archers rule

SANTO Tomas took the ruling seat of Far Eastern to pave away the men's title while La Salle completed its masterful dominance to women's play as the UAAP season 67 badminton tournament came to a close Sunday.

The Tigers upped FEU to pull off a 6-0 sweep of the men's tournament and their first UAAP crown.

In the final women's round-robin event played at the Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym, top La Salle lost and 8-7 Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym, top La Salle lost and 8-7 Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym, top La Salle lost and 8-7

Scott clinches rain-shortened Nissan Open

LOS ANGELES—Australia's Adam Scott rolled home a three-footer on the first playoff hole to defeat Chad Campbell Monday at the PGA Tour's rain-shortened Los Angeles event.

At 24, Scott has already claimed three victories on the US tour, but Monday's win won't add to that cache because inclement weather forced organizers to shorten the event to 36 holes, it won't count as an official victory although Scott did earn the full first prize of $954,000.

"I don't feel like I played much golf this week," Scott said. "I don't feel tired and desired like you normally do when you've been battling." Officials had hoped to complete a third round on Monday but more heavy rain overnight left parts of the Stevens Country Club course unplayable.

They resolved to the 36-hole norm, which saw Scott and Campbell tied at nine-under 133.

In the sudden-death playoff at 18, both players had three-foot pars for par, but Campbell's lipped out and Scott's didn't.

"The putt was outside left, and I just hit it a little bit firm," said Campbell, who had finished his second round on Friday and hadn't hit a ball since until resuming on for the playoff.

Scott didn't join him atop the leaderboard until Sunday. He was among those who couldn't finish the second round on Friday, all of whom were left hanging when play was washed out completely on Saturday.

The last time a PGA event went only 36 holes was the 1996 Buick Challenge, which was won by Michael Bradley in a five-way playoff.

The decision on Monday morning was to say for a full third round ended the hopes of Northern Ireland's Darren Clarke and England's Brian Davis, who shared third on 134 after two rounds.

Scotland's Colin Montgomerie finished a further stroke back on 135, alongside American Jl Gotsis.

Despite the difficulties of the week, Montgomerie had the satisfaction of posting his first round under-par on US soil—a second-round 84. But Montgomerie didn't make as much headway as he might have hoped in improving his world ranking, since only 75 percent of the second world ranking points are awarded for a 36-hole event.

The win also helped derail Tiger Woods' bid to regain the world number one ranking from Vijay Singh. Woods started the week with a chance to recapture the top spot, but finished tied for 13th. AFP

ADAM! Scott holds the winner's trophy. AFP

Agassi advances, receives standing ovation in Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Andre Agassi dispatched Rafael Nadal, 6-4, 7-5, on Monday in his first appearance at the $975,000 (euro740,000) Dubai Men's Open, earning a standing ovation from the largest crowd to see a tennis event in the United Arab Emirates.

The No. 4 seed in the 32-man field, Agassi delighted the capacity crowd in the 5,000-seat Dubai Tennis Stadium, prevailing in two hours and sparking up for an opening match in the tournament's 12-year history.

"I have had a few great days here at Dubai," the eight-time Grand Slam winner said. "I have wanted a long time to be here, and I must apologize for being so late."

In the only other match involving a seeded player on Monday, No. 5 Tommy Robredo of Spain used his pair of forehands better to finally subdue Olivier Rochus of Belgium, 7-6 (5), 7-5 (3).

Robredo was one of three Spaniards to win on Monday.

Agassi was in control for nearly the entire match despite 12 aces by Hrubesch and some great shots around the court.

After breaking Agassi in the seventh game of the second set to go ahead, the Czech gave away the advantage with three double faults.

"He is an unbeaten player," Agassi said. "He knows the court so well and you just don't know what he will do next."

Unlike Agassi, Robredo struggled to open during his match. He jumped ahead 5-0 in the first set before being forced to a tiebreak and took two hours and 13 minutes to complete the victory.

Robredo's compatriot Juan Carlos Ferrero also won, beating Germany's Florian Mayer, 6-3, 6-4, while Fernando Verdasco defeated qualifier Vladimir Voltchkov of Belarus, 6-2, 6-2.

Ferrero, the 2003 Dubai Open champion who has not won an ATP title since Madrid in 2003 and has been out of his current matches due to a knee injury, will face top-seed Roger Federer next.

Federer played his opening match against qualifier Ivo Minar on Tuesday.

Robredo next meets Jiasta Vatias Berdych of Czech Republic, who defeated Novak Karel Berk, 6-1, 7-6 (4).

In other matches, Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia outlasted Omar Rahwan of the United Arab Emirates, 6-4, 6-4, while Germany's Rainer Schuettler beat Younes Al Aynaoui of Morocco, 6-1, 6-1. AP

AGASSI receives the ball in Radek Stepanek during the Dubai Tennis Championship.

Tiger eyes return to top at WGC

TUCSON—A possible return to the top of the rankings will provide added incentive for Tiger Woods when he defends his title at this week's World Golf Championships (WGC) Bluefay event.

With the exception of number three Retief Goosen, South Africa, 64 of the 66 top-ranked players will travel to the La Costa Resort and Spa to take on world No. 1 Vijay Singh of Fiji. Woods going back to number one for the world.

This is a daunting task given the 20 overall American's early-season form and consistent manner of the match play format.

A fearless competitor who thrives on head-to-head competition, Woods has demonstrated this event since it began six years ago, claiming back-to-back wins in 2000 and 2004 and finishing runner-up in 2999.

He has a sparkling 20-3 record in the tournament and will carry a 12-match unbeaten run into Wednesday's first round tussle with Nick Price of Zimbabwe.

"Any time you play match play it is really tough on your mind," said world number two Woods.

"It's just I'm going head-to-head against someone and always has been. Just think them football vs football and say, let's go." For the first time, Woods will arrive in California not needed number one but will fully expect to leave with the title of the world's best player to be contradicted in Vijay Singh last season.

For the two time world, Singh, Woods, Phil Mickelson and David Toms will be placed in different groups, with the other 64 players field divided into four sections. Reuters

SORENSTAM

Sorenstam files for divorce from Esch

ANDRE Sorenstam, the No. 1 player in women's golf and one of the most famous female athletes in the world, has filed for divorce from David Esch, her husband of eight years.

"I want to confirm that I have filed for divorce," Sorenstam said in a statement released by The Associated Press on Sunday. "We are working toward an amicable resolution and we appreciate the media's respect for our privacy. I wish David nothing but the best for the future."

Golfweek magazine reported the divorce was filed Feb. 4 in Circuit Court of Orange County, not far from where Sorenstam and Esch live in the gated community of Lake Nona. The suit has been sealed, and no other details were available.

Sorenstam had hinted in early retirement in recent years, saying she might want to start a family.

But rumors that the marriage was rocky began last year when Esch, highly visible throughout Sorenstam's career, stopped traveling as frequently. Esch began to work in real estate near their summer home in Indian Village, Mich. They have been separated the last two months.

He was last seen at the Samsung World Championship in Palm Desert, Calif., in October, when Sorenstam shot 67 in the final round to win.

But he was out of the season-ending ADT Championship, when Sorenstam was presented with her seventh LPGA player of the year award. Sorenstam thanked her husband in the acceptance speech, their went on to win her eighth LPGA Tour victory of the year.

Sorenstam also was at Espalito to play in the pro-am at the PGA Tour's season-opening Mercedes Championships. She spent three days on Maui with her sister, Charlotta.

The LPGA Tour season starts Feb. 24 in Hawaii, although Sorenstam will not be playing. She is scheduled to make her 2005 debut the following tournament, March 4 at Mexico City. AP

Philippoussis out of Australia Davis Cup team

SYDNEY, Australia—Two-time veteran Mark Philippoussis has been left off Australia's team for next month's Davis Cup match against Austria, with selectors opting for journeyman tennis player and golfer Scott Draper in his place.

Draper, who recently retired, has said to play on the three-day indoor grass-covered golf tour, said he'd have no problem with the decision to overlook for the March 4-6 Davis Cup match in Esplanade.

He could play in the second singles spot behind No. 2-ranked Gustavo Kuerten, who has been named equal the last two Grand Slam events.

Doubles specialist Todd Woodbridge and Wayne Arthurs were also named Tuesday to Australia's four-man team.

Philippoussis had a serious playoff by injuries to 2004, when his ranking slid from No. 9 in the world to No. 106. He missed the Australian Open last month after pulling out of the Hopman Cup international mixed teams event with a groin strain.

PHILIPPOUSSIS

Philippoussis was expected in return to competition this week.

Philippoussis "wants to be part of the Davis Cup but here and there are a concern and he just needs more rest," said Australia's coach Wally Masur. "We will welcome him back with open arms but at the moment it's a case of him working on his fitness and improving his ranking."

Masur said he had no concerns about Draper's fitness, despite the 30-year-old Draper playing nearly golf since winning the inland doubles title in the Sydney Open tennis tournament last month.

"He's the right man for the job," said Masur.

Draper's previous Davis Cup appearances were a loss against Argentina and a win over India in 2000.

Draper missed the cut at his two most recent golf tournaments, the New Zealand Open and the Jacobs Creek Open and will skip two tournaments on Australia's secondary golf tour to prepare for the Davis Cup. AP

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St. Stephen reigns

BEIJING, China—St. Stephen High School ousted Xavier High School, 74-56, to win the 2005 Filoil-Metro Manila Tong Lan Basketball League crown recently at the Ching Kai Shih Gym.

It was St. Stephen's eighth crown in the league sanctioned by the Basketball Association of the Philippines and sponsored by Filoil and supported by Asaf, Hang Ten, Healthy Options and Dunro Sauce.

Rishi Go and Lawrence Mendoza led a dazzling performance as St. Stephen surged ahead, 46-34, after three quarters and never let up.

ST. Stephen High team, with a coach Godwin Monroy at right, Kish Co (4) and Lawrence Wu (5), with their championship trophy

P. Princesa hosting FIM moto anew

PUERTO Princesa plays host to the 2005 FIM International Motocross Championship for the second straight year on March 20 at the race track near the City Hall.

FIM-UMB president Marby Earnest, gaming in yesterday's weekly PSA forum at the Holiday Inn Manila Pavilion, said Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn is supervising the preparations to ensure the success of the "Motocross Masters of Asia" event.

"Hagedorn believes the event will be a big boost to the country's tourism industry as it will not only publicize the Subterranean River, which is one of the 7 New 7 Wonders of Nature finalists, but also the entire province," Earnest said.

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BUSINESS

Julio Raul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Nakpil

Foreign chambers buck VAT on IPPs

Currencies

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

$1 = ₱ 55.65
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 22, 2001

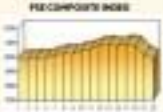
₱1 = $ 0.0179
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 22, 2001

GOLD: $ 427.00-427.50 per ounce, Hong Kong, Feb. 21, 2001

Stock Market

Shares end lower on technical correction

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARES ended lower yesterday for the third straight session due to security concerns but bearing bombings had weak and government delays to stabilize value-added tax, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index fell 30.36 points, or 1.5 percent, to end at 1,993.37, following a loss of 7 percent Monday. Decliners led gainers 83 to 21, while 36 stocks were unchanged.

The loss brings the total index decline to 6 percent since last Friday following its best finish in over five years.

Dragging down the index were losses by blue chips Ayala Corp., down 0.25 percent at P1.20; its unit Ayala Land, off 1; Franklin at P0.19; and affiliate Bank of the Philippine Islands, lower by 3.0 percent at P54.

Some stocks managed to rebound from the sell-off. Benpres rose 3.2 percent to P1.28. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. inched 0.4 percent to P1.200 on bargain hunting.

SA Market Securities president Nestor Aguila said the heaviest the sell-off was exaggerated, with investors catching on to negative news as an excuse to unload holdings. AP

By Michelle V. Rerne

FOREIGN business chambers are one in opposing the government's proposal to impose a value-added tax on electricity, stressing that it would further drag down the competitiveness of businesses operating in the Philippines.

The foreign chambers said in a joint position paper that local owners have been already suffering from a higher operating cost compared with their counterparts in the region, and that their situation would be aggravated should the VAT plan be pursued.

The business groups, led by the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, also warned that the addition of cost in electricity would discourage investments in the Philippines, whose power rates were already among the highest in Asia.

"Average [cost considering expenses of existing manufacturing companies in the Philippines or bearing basis for the first time will be devastated from increasing by higher power rates, in addition to other existing disincentives in the area of doing business," the business groups said.

Aside from ratchets and the Canadian business chambers, other foreign business chambers opposed to the proposed VAT on electricity include the Australian New Zealand Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Korean Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters.

The government's economic team is pushing for the lifting of the VAT exemption of several sectors, including that of independent power producers (IPPs). By imposing a VAT on IPPs, on top of moves to regain some generation charges by the cash-strapped National Power Corp., electricity rates are expected to further surge.

The move to impose a VAT on IPPs is part of the Arroyo administration's revenue-raising proposal to reform the VAT system. The economic team said there should be less VAT exemptions as possible to improve the collections in collecting the cost, and therefore help ease the government's lingering budget woes. Apart from lifting VAT exemptions, the Arroyo administration is also pushing to raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

The foreign business chambers said they were not against the proposal to raise the VAT rate by two percentage points and imposing a VAT on currently exempted sectors, but said electricity should be spared.

Treasury bond rate eases to 12.375%

By Michelle V. Rerne

WITH a high level of market liquidity, the 15-year treasury bond rate dropped to 12.375 percent during yesterday's auction, continuing the declining trend in yields of government securities.

The rate rose for the 15-year debt instrument was 37.5 basis points lower than the 12.75 percent recorded in its previous auction in July last year.

"The liquidity of the market is still positive. The market is still reacting positively to the developments on the fiscal front and the legislative measures being pushed for address the fiscal problems," outgoing Bankard Treasurer Norma Landa said in a press briefing after the auction.

Landa, who will serve as treasurer until the formal appointment of banker Chito Tivet, was referring to government efforts to push for revenue-raising measures to improve its fiscal situation.

The domestic capital market for the 20-year treasury bonds, composed mostly of banks and insurance companies, scrambled for the long-term government security. The debt instrument was highly oversubscribed, as tenders totalled P44.35 billion compared with the government's offering of only P9 billion.

The Treasury's auction committee accepted P6 billion, or its entire borrowing requirements for the week, following it got a good response rate of 12.375 percent.

Despite the huge market up-

Inquirer Monitor

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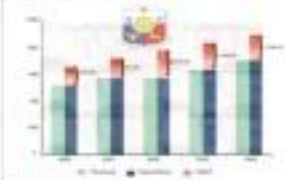
(2000 to 2004, in billion pesos)



Sources: Budget Office, Bureau of Treasury

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Sky offers unlimited Internet plan at fixed rate

By Clarissa S. Batino

Sky Cable Corporation, Inc. yesterday said Sky Internet was now offering an unlimited dial-up Internet plan at the lowest monthly flat rate of P499.

The move will allow the company to capture a bigger share of the market.

Sugar-coated Beyond Incubator 11,000 Internet subscribers and it aims to attract thousands of additional subscribers with the new plan.

Unlimited dial-up plans cost between P600 and P900 a month, although some players are offering a flat rate of P500 a month.

Rodrigo Montecalvo, head of Beyond Marketing Unit, said the P499 a month offer was a plan and not a promo. But it will initially be made available in Metro Manila only.

The Sky Internet's plan was released following a survey conducted by Beyond showing that an average user consumes P1,000 for unlimited surf a month.

"Based on this research, we believe Sky Internet's plan offers superior value to the user by providing unlimited Internet connection using our telephone service," he said.

"By offering unlimited Internet connection at a fixed rate, we are providing the growing mass of Internet users the best value for their Internet needs while encouraging more households to hook up without the fear of paying for fluctuating monthly charges," Montecalvo added.

Montecalvo assured users that Sky Internet would continue to deliver the ease and speed of Internet connectivity that the company was noted for.

The company recently launched the new SLIM Technology, a new feature that speeds up Internet surfing up to six times faster than regular dial-up speeds based on international tests it conducted only for Sky Internet users.

SLIM works by decreasing unnecessary traffic through compression, caching, file download acceleration and ad blocking. It also comes with privacy and security features that shield the user's IP, from harmful viruses and annoying applications, explained Rodel Dalmeron. It also offers Sky Internet subscribers a security option that will prevent children from accessing unwanted websites.

Low budget for infra projects worries construction sector

By Rainier W. Dumlao

LOCAL cement makers and construction are concerned over their ranking as the government increases spending on infrastructure and roads to only more on foreign funds for such projects, which require important kinds from foreign countries.

The Cement Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines and the Philippine Contractors' Association expressed "frustration" over the continuing construction slump in the country.

In a statement, Gotesco said prospects for the industry "remained grim" as the government's budget for big infrastructure projects was limited to just a tenth of the total market size.

Gotesco said that most of the government's infrastructure projects were contracted under "tied" foreign loans. Tied loans call for the importation of materials and supplies from the lending countries.

The group said these projects included the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway project; the Bacolod City and Iloilo City airports; the repair of the Alabang viaduct and the widening and extension of the Southern Luzon Expressway and the rehabilitation of the 17 kilometer Epifanio de los Santos Avenue or Edsa.

Gotesco president Felix Enrico P. Alfelor said the prospect of a continuing slump, the reduction in the mix prices of coal (fuel for power generation) used in the cement factories) and other costs passed a saving on the stability of cement firms.

Alfelor said the companies were continuing efforts to turn the use of alternative fuels as prices of coal and freight rose. "But these take time and

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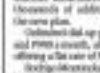

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Rising coal prices put pressure on RP industries

INCREASES in coal prices and freight rates in the region pose a (text) burden on Philippine industries that have yet to recover from both the Asian and local financial crises.

Coal prices in the region have skyrocketed due to unprecedented demand from China. From an average of $27.16 per ton in 2003, coal prices rose 113 percent to $58.07 as of the third quarter of 2004.

Coal prices hit a high of $61.12 per ton last month, or an increase of 130 percent from the 2003 prices, according to Platts International Coal Report.

These prices do not include the cost of freight and transportation from the mine coal sources to the region, including China, Indonesia, Australia and Russia.

The shortage of vessels in the region further compounded the coal crisis in the Philippines.

More recently the exclusive explosions in China's Liaoning and Fujian provinces also further threaten coal supplies to the Philippines, which is already suffering from high coal prices and limited local supply.

China's freight rates also increased from $12 to $16 per ton, due to the increased need for raw materials owning to China's rapid modernization as the country gears up for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition. This has caused a increase of freight rate increase throughout the region as well, in addition to the difficulty of

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Focus on doing a good job keeps top news executive grounded

FLORES

By Cecilio D. Garcia
Contributor

CAREER TALES

GMA one he lose-key in a high-powered job? Shanna Flores, senior vice president for News and Public Affairs of GMA Network, Inc., proves this can be done to a certain extent. Keeping a low profile seems to come naturally to Flores. "I like being low-key," says Flores who apparently doesn't care for the trappings and the power and glitz that purportedly come with the territory.

However, for one who does her job well, being low-key all the time is just not possible. Just last year, Flores was picked to receive the 2006 Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) Award for Broadcast Management. To top this, she was named Supervisor of the Year in 2004 by the Philippine Association of Broadcasting Executives.

Flores is focused on doing a good job. That, she says, is the key. She says, "I'm in charge of all public affairs programs. I attend our public meetings where we plan and strategize. I report directly to the president and the executive vice president." A great part of her job is managing people of every type and variety, as well as dealing with the talents and talent issues that often crop up. She points out, "I have to put all these together and steer them towards one direction."

Where she belongs

Flores is a BA Communication major in Journalism graduate of the University of the Philippines. "I took my college internship or practicum at GMA, where I met Tina Monzon who introduced me to broadcasting," she says, recalling her initial exposure to the network. She remarks, "I liked it. In a sense, GMA was my first choice. I wanted to get a job there, but it was difficult at that time. I ended up working for a company that provided services for foreign networks like ABC. I stayed for a year and then joined a Japanese newspaper's local bureau." One day, she learned that there was an opening at GMA. She was taken in on a contractual basis. She chose those years, she did research, became an assistant producer, then an executive producer of a public affairs program and eventually became a regular employee.

By 1998, Flores was program manager for News and Public Affairs, and was promoted to assistant vice president for Public Affairs less four later. It wasn't long before she was named vice president for production. In November 2005, she became senior vice president for News and Public Affairs. She assumed her current position in July 2005.

Intact integrity

Promotions even with the still growing network that taught her some important lessons, claims Flores. She says, "I've learned that hard work always pays off and that you can never go wrong with honesty." Because competition in broadcasting can be reckless, she has developed a healthy attitude towards it. She says may be the name of the game and being number one may seem like be-all and end-all. "But being number one doesn't mean losing sight of responsibility. Being number one and keeping your integrity intact should go hand-in-hand," she notes. Her passion for excellence notwithstanding, Flores says she would not sacrifice credibility and would uphold values at all costs.

The truth is, Flores never planned a career in broadcasting. "I just wanted a job in television," she quips. Earlier, she wanted to do something that involved writing or to go into music. (Because she likes singing). That she ended up in television that was so consuming never crossed her mind. "My work is consuming in terms of everything," she says.

First priority

This has been, in fact, her biggest challenge from day one. "You spend weekends hoping nothing will happen and your phone won't ring. Everything revolves around your job and it is a difficult job. Production is so complicated. Where I am now, work is first priority," she says matter-of-factly. Her two greatest challenge, she adds, GMA recently inked a production and blockstar agreement with Channel 11.

Nothing beats the thrill of seeing a program succeed. Still, it's the best part of her job, maintains Flores, and it is what motivates her. "I'm also motivated by a desire to pave the way for the next batch, for them to uphold what we built," she says.

Flores values honesty, diligence and fairness, and is turned off by any form of inefficiency. Describing herself as a hands-on, open-minded manager, she is very judgmental and tries to be fair in all issues. She notes, "I'm told I have a sharp sense of what works and what doesn't. One thing I can say I really work hard." She believes in team effort and is grateful for having people who are dedicated and committed to their work. Equally important, she finds fulfillment in producing "shows that make an impact" and in seeing people she has taught and trained doing their job well.

Instinct for success

What about her achievements? Says Flores, "I believe the News and Public Affairs department itself is the showcase of my achievements." For over a decade, she has been producing and supervising a number of GMA 7's successful and award-winning shows, such as "I-Witness," "Dateline," "Tadhana" and "Reports Ex-clu-sive" (she was the first executive producer of the last two mentioned). Notably, Flores also produced and supervised "Debateyon 2004," "Debateyon 2005," "Tadhana ni Kuya Germs (2005)" and "The President on Trial (2004)," specials about the impeachment trial of former President Joseph Estrada.

It could be her unerring sense of what works and what doesn't or the passion she pours into her work. But, Flores would tell you that it's largely trust, effort and the unrelenting support of the network itself that account for the success of her shows. She explains further, "We have a programming committee that meets regularly to determine what shows to air. I recommend. I suppose it also helps that the atmosphere at GMA is one of healthy competition and openness. Everybody is free to talk, even to the top brass. We are not bureaucrats."

The eldest of two children (she has a younger brother), Flores considers grandmother as her role model. Here's why: "My grandmother, Lola Nena, was strong and driven, yet humble and compassionate. Her main drive was prayer. She helped shape my character. The day she died in 1986 was probably the saddest day of my life." She also admires Mrs. Felipe Gozon, president and CEO of GMA. "Because he's a regular guy, but very sharp and diligent."

At this point, Flores too has one simple "ambition." She would like to achieve a perfect balance between her work and her private life.

Employee volunteerism in Petron is a 'people power movement'

By Ervin O. Cecilio
Contributor

PETRON employee volunteers take part in relief efforts to help typhoon victims in Misamis Oriental

DO YOU ever wonder why people at work in plush Makati offices would go to rural areas in their own time and plant mangrove propagules, distribute relief goods, build houses, or teach indigent children? What do they have to gain by sharing time with street children or cleaning the coast or helping survivors in distress?

Perhaps, people just want to be part of something, knowingly or unknowingly—like a "people power movement."

Arlene Jose Martinez is a market planning analyst at Petron Corporation. For the past five years, she has been sharing her time as a Petron volunteer. She says, "As long as somebody is willing to share, hope nothing is missed for this world. We do not want our children to grow up to a world full of selfishness, hatred and neglect. We want to plant the seed of hope in each beneficiary to continue striving to be a better person. Knowing that somebody would be there if he needs help along the way."

Arlene is one of the thousands of Petron volunteers (40 percent of employees and 110 percent of managers) volunteer yearly in various projects in education, environment and health and human services. To make those projects work, Petron organized its volunteer employees and retirees into what they call Volunteerism in Action (VIA).

"Through VIA, we are able to exhibit the kind of corporate leadership where promises are fulfilled, commitments are honored and pronouncements are lived up to," says Marilou Uriel, Petron Foundation executive director. Through the VIA, Petron draws management and employee support for its average of 12 projects yearly.

Way of life

Employee volunteerism is a way of life in Petron. In 2002, the volunteer projects generated 98,000 volunteer hours that benefited over 41,000 families and individuals across the country. Helping large numbers of people have made heavy lives. It also made many Petron employees count their blessings.

Max Quevedo, an accountant, says, "I never realized the extent of poverty in our country until I volunteered in many projects for the natural areas. Through these projects, we were able to help in a large scale. Individually and with very limited resources, we could not have made a difference to the people we helped."

Volunteerism in Petron is not limited to projects in rural areas. Jessica, a treasury officer, started volunteer work as an adviser to the Junior Achievement of the Philippines, Inc. (JAPI). Says Jessie, "I never took the task for granted. I gave so much of myself to JAPI that I scored a perfect attendance, despite having to juggle my time in JAPI work with my hectic schedule."

Psychic payback

So, what do volunteers get in return? Many look good that "my reason to live" is more than just about my efforts to reach them. What could be more than that? My boss, my peers and other Petron employees who hear about what I did acknowledge my contribution to JAPI. But what I like most is that I feel good inside knowing that I did my best for the benefit of others... no amount of money can buy that feeling inside me."

Like Jessie, Norman Alfonso of Industrial Relations wants to share his blessings "as a true Christian, in my own little way."

Executive Director Erni says, "Volunteerism gives our employees an opportunity for personal growth. It gives benefit for professional choices and for involved in making a difference in society ..."

Administrative systems analyst Santos Gozon has realized each personal growth by actively volunteering in various projects. He remarks, "I started volunteering to reach out to our less fortunate brothers and sisters—something that I can't do without the help of the volunteer project in Petron. I have grown spiritually. The time and efforts are great to see brothers and sisters are immensely able to thrive."

Mission to help

Scottie says, "I do not believe that God so loved the poor that He made plenty of them. I believe God so loved us all that He made those who have plenty to share their blessings to the less fortunate brothers and sisters."

Interestingly, some retiree volunteers could not join the volunteer activities due to work pressure. Dolores Ramirez of Transaction Management missed Project Joy last year. She said, "In my absence, I volunteered my children in Project Joy. They were happy and excited with the rare experience of helping poor children. I believe that my children have somehow developed some awareness that they are more blessed and that it's better to help than be on the receiving end."

Reader needs buyers for medicinal plants

By Tita Dora Pearpoo

Advice
FOR THE ANGELS PERON at WORK

I AM a regional director for research of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and presently assigned at the regional office in Tagaytay City. Your column provides very useful insights and practical advice to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Our group of individual researchers are mainly tasked with generating technologies and information about natural resources, environment and various ecosystems. It is also its good part responsible in assisting the various upland communities in the development of appropriate livelihood projects. There are many copious and unpresentable economic studies, including obstacles and difficulties in our setting such as the lack of financing and low access to marketing networks.

In one of our Community Livelihood Assistance Special Projects, we have selected a People's Organization or Association (POA) in the establishment of Sambong and Lagundi plantation for a total of one hectare. The said plantation is now ready for harvest but we are faced with the problem in terms of marketing. We have made some representations with another people's organization but we are concerned with those potential buyers of raw materials of medicinal plants. We need buyers who presently process and sell medicinal or herbal tea.

Kindly do us the favor and help us find individuals and trading buyers of said raw materials. This action will provide the initial jumpstart to further development of subject upland communities within this region. Thank you for your help and your advice on this matter will be most welcome.

ER-Principe

Thank you for your letter. I wish to commend you for being proactive and demonstrating initiative for the people's organization that you are trying to help. So refreshing as action from a government agency. Frankly, the best help I can give is making public your letter. My hope is for you, your members and your fellow people's organizations who need your materials to come forward and we provide the link with you.

But you are right. In this day and age where technology can bridge people through text or e-mail we don't have a network that links suppliers and buyers, especially for agricultural products. I dream that the government will take the initiative to create a web site where farmers can get information on prices of supplies and produce, putting buyers and sellers in touch. I recall an initiative was started years back but up to now not bing tangible has come of it. Its maintenance is former only to you.

Then again, in terms of persons, it is better that the people's organization through your assistance made some market research before embarking on the project. This course undertaking an opportunity assessment that clearly identifies the potential buyers for the medicinal plants even before planting. What would be ideal is to come out and face-to-face conversations with actual buyers. In this manner, you encounter what the Japanese call "genba." You can plan ahead, knowing at what price they will buy so you can compute expenses to find out whether the project is feasible and profitable. You can also consider added costs of transport, handling, storage etc. But let me hope with you that a company would need the medicinal plants you will harvest.

On another matter, we thank Commissioner Hayor of Land Bank of the Philippines for responding very quickly to your request for possibility of our agribusiness Entrepreneurs getting financing for the water supply equipment needed in his farm. My also received offers in favor from two overseas Filipinos, in case the entrepreneur is open to equity investment. Meanwhile, why envy and feed them. (My Pearpoo is CEO and chair of the Cilla Enterprise Development Consulting. Send feedback through e-mail to advice@mailbank.com.ph or fax to 892-3902.)

CIBELES INSURANCE CORPORATION

SYNOPSIS OF ANNUAL STATEMENT
As of December 31, 2002

ADMITTED ASSETS

Bonds	₱ 194,909,934.15
Stocks	15,349,291.25
Real Estate	93,241,362.34
Security Fund	0.67
Other Investments	11,000,000.00
Cash on Hand and in Banks	394,551,603.91
Premiums Receivable	4,051,458.34
Premiums Due From Ceding Companies	2,221,623.63
Premiums Reserve Withheld by Ceding Companies	791,216.85
Reinsurance Recoverable on Losses	10,681,456.86
Accrued Investment Income	3,221,365.15
EDP Equipment	599,974.91
Total Admitted Assets	**₱ 734,511,054.75**

LIABILITIES

Losses & Claims Payable	₱ 197,323,046.52
Loss Adjustment Expense Payable	83,756.89
Reserve for Unearned Premiums	10,494,561.52
Catastrophe Loss Reserve	106,169.41
Premiums Due to Reinsurers	31,760,291.36
Premiums Reserve Withheld by Reinsurers	16,164,877.23
Accrued Expenses	861,111.42
Taxes Payable	10,221,263.43
Commissions Payable	1,921,874.54
Accounts Payable	883,894.38
Other Liabilities	44,824,945.80
Total Liabilities	**₱ 313,855,981.14**

STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY

Capital Stock Paid-up	₱ 300,000,000.00
Contributed Surplus	150,000.00
Contingency Surplus	844,864.47
Fluctuation Reserve – Foreign Exchange	4,943,554.53
Revaluation Reserve – Real Estate	42,897,750.58
Retained Earnings	(72,180,527.47)
Total Stockholders' Equity	**₱ 420,655,173.01**
Total Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	**₱ 734,511,054.75**

(This synopsis prepared from the 2002 Annual Statement, approved by the Insurance Commissioner as published pursuant to Section 326 of the Insurance Code of 1978, as amended.)

SM Investments' IPO approved

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has approved the maiden public offering of SM Investments Corp. of retail magnate Henry Sy Sr.

The SEC said SMIC aimed to raise between P12.196 billion to P13.5 billion from the listed Public Offering (IPO).

After deducting underwriting fees, commissions and other expenses, net proceeds are expected to reach between P11.7 billion and P12.96 billion.

SMIC will use the bulk of the proceeds or between P8.74 billion and P10 billion to pay down related to property development, tourism and leisure. Part of the proceeds, amounting to P1 billion to P1.5 billion (depending on the final size of the offer), will be used to pay bank and liabilities.

The offer price will be at least P210 a share. The total shares to be offered were estimated at between 75 million to 140 million shares.

Of these, the primary shares will represent between 36.25 million and 105 million shares. Secondary shares will be between 38.75 million and 35 million.

In a preliminary prospectus filed with the SEC, SMIC said it would offer 15-30 percent of its expanded number of outstanding shares.

With a minimum offer of 15 percent of the capital base, SMIC may offer 75 million to new shares. The shares are being proposed for sale to the domestic market and qualified institutional buyers in the United States.

SMIC is tapping Macquarie Securities (Asia) Pte. Ltd. as global coordinator for the international offering and BDO Capital & Investment Corp. for the domestic offering.

The domestic offering is set for March 6 to March 16. SMIC has interests in commercial centers through mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc., retail, wholesale and merchandising through department store operations; financial services and banking through Banco de Oro Universal Bank, and real estate development and tourism.

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AIM-less charges

THE FORMER president of the Asian Institute of Management, Felipe Alfonso, has been cleared of credit card bouncing checks charges filed against him by a lawyer on double value bad checks paid with inflated peso dollars.

"No sales invoice, receipt, affidavit of registration, written acknowledgment, or any document whatsoever ... was ever presented" to prove that Alfonso had indeed purchased or received these luxury vehicles from the complaining car dealer, said the resident Quezon City Prosecutor Arthur Malabaguio. He said that the AIM official's motive in all of his "mal plan."

Alfonso had submitted testimony that blank but pre-signed checks, which were later used to acquire a Lamborghini Murcielago, a BMW 645 Ci and a BMW Z3 for P12.5 million, fluctuated in the form check, with a face value of P9.028 less, the rest of the checks bounced.

Alfonso, who resigned his directorship of Bienbank in charge of the 814 management committee after the scandal became public, said he issued the checks in August 2004 to the alleged scammer, Justo Jesús Asensio Mark Anthony Mirasol, of Corinthian Gardens, in order to land dispute in Batangas, not to buy any luxury vehicle.

To prove himself, Alfonso asked Mirasol to sign a show of payment saying that he would limit the amount to a minimum of P150,000 per check.

Despite the P150,000 ceiling, Alfonso agreed to make good the P4-million check after Mirasol personally gave him P400,000 in cash, and was given the nod by Mirasol that P14 million had been deposited in Alfonso's account.

The P4-million check was supposed to have gone to pay certain commissions with a Dodge Avenger Inconvenience of Lipa City Ernesto Dalusong, incidentally a student of Alfonso at AIM, to guard the two other luxury cars without waiting for the three other Alfonso checks to clear.

The Lamborghini and the 645 Ci were later found to be outside of another Quezon City car dealer, Rolando Evangelista

Thailand, RP central banks in 4th round of talks

By Dorie C. Dardao

THE BANK of Thailand and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas are looking at bolstering closer cooperation in the aftermath of turbulent times in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian currency turmoil.

"There is so much that the two countries could learn from each other," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said yesterday.

Top officials of the Bank of Thailand are in town for the fourth round of bilateral discussions between the two central banks, which started in Bangkok in December 2000.

"Our discussions will be quite extensive, comparing our experience in 2000 as regards to economic and financial performance and challenges for 2001 and 2002, debt profile and performance of monetary policy," Buenaventura said.

The BSP chief said the discussions would facilitate further information sharing so that the monetary authorities could better respond to new challenges.

Thailand, for instance, implemented its inflation-targeting monetary policy two years ahead of the Philippines.

The inflation-targeting approach means that any monetary tightening is determined by how inflation rates react to the amount of money circulating in the system.

The two-day bilateral discussions with the Bank of Thailand, led by its deputy governor Pavida Pongsaka, kicked off yesterday in Bohol.

The results of the bilateral talks will be disclosed tomorrow, Buenaventura said.

The first bilateral meeting initiated by the Bank of Thailand delved on the recent global economic slowdown, consolidated supervision and the implementation of the new Basel capital accord, exchange rate policy and risk management in the implementation of monetary policy.

Successive meetings centered on issues such as inflation-targeting, risk-based supervision and reconciliation of non-performing assets of financial institutions.

The Bank of Thailand likewise conducted bilateral talks with the Bank of Japan.

The two monetary institutions reached their second bilateral arrangement under the Chiang Mai initiative of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus 3.

The ASEAN+3 countries to swap their local currencies—other Thai baht or Japanese yen—for about $5 billion, depending on the need by first-time cash.

It is not known whether the bilateral discussions with the Philippines will result in a similar currency arrangement.

The Chiang Mai Initiative was formalized at the Asean+3 Summer Ministers' Meeting in May 2000 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

It is aimed at providing a response of the Asian Currency Crisis in 1997-98.

It also aims to create a "network of bilateral swap arrangements", through which short-term liquidity will be provided to support participating Asean+3 countries in need.

The network of bilateral swap arrangements involves China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

The Chiang Mai Initiative is now under review at the Asean+3 Finance Ministers Process with a view to extending its effectiveness and help mobilize resources among members.

Once the review is completed, the second bilateral swap arrangement will be revised in accordance with the agreement.

PSE director questions Colayco nomination

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A MEMBER of the Philippine Stock Exchange board has questioned the nomination of Italo Colayco, former president of the Bases Conversion Development Authority, to the board.

PSE chairman Francisco Viloria said in a letter to the PSE nominations and elections committee that Colayco was not even a member of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, which endorsed his nomination.

Dolfuss, on the other hand, told the business that he has accepted his nomination and believes that he can make a contribution to the stock market.

"I was nominated and, then, said that I was nominated on," he said.

He added that even if he was not a member of Finex, the association may have chosen to back him because it believes that he can contribute to the development of the capital markets.

Dolfuss has been involved with the Ganapin Group and was senior partner in GCV & Co. for 20 years.

The PSE is set to elect its new board on March 19.

Of its 13-man board, eight will come from the ranks of non-brokers.

Five of these non-brokers sit as president of the PSE, three are independent directors and four represent the interest of issuers, investors, and other market participants not associated with any broker-dealer in PSE stockholders over the last two years.

The remaining seven members of the board of directors will be brokers' group basically representing the stockholders in terms of volume and value of trade as well as participation.

Brokers that handle trades worth at least P500 million are members of the board.

Over the last two years, the PSE elections have been marred by controversies over the election of non-brokers who control majority of the board.

Thus, the election of non-brokers is crucial in the election of the PSE chairperson.

A SOUTH Korean banker counts US dollar bank notes at the Korea Exchange bank in Seoul. The US dollar hit a fresh seven-year low against the Korean won on increasing stock purchases by overseas investors. The greenback fell below the 1,150 won level. AFP

S&P to keep RP rating

CREDIT ratings agency Standard and Poor's said Tuesday it remains disappointed at the slow pace of tax reforms in the Philippines, supporting an unlikely reverse of a ratings downgrade in January.

The agency last month lowered its credit ratings on the Philippines by one notch, citing concerns over a chronic budget deficit and delays in the government getting legislation to raise tax revenues through Congress.

In a report Tuesday, Standard and Poor's said a "qualitative shift in revenue mobilization capability remains absent" in the Philippines.

"Progress on proposed tax measures aimed at offering such a shift [in revenue mobilization] has been disappointing. Only two of eight laws proposed by the president in June 2000 had been passed and signed into law by January 2001," it said.

"In a result, the main revenue collecting agency, the Bureau of Internal Revenue [which accounts for 70 per of revenues] has underperformed in 2000 target by about 10 percent and only the Customs and Treasury departments have exceeded their respective targets."

If passed, a proposed increase in value-added tax (VAT) to 12 percent from 10 percent could be approved by the House of Representatives could improve government's revenues.

However, the VAT hike bill will have stiff opposition from several sectors and analysts. AFP

Japan seen set for mild growth after economy shrank in Q4

TOKYO—Economists have revised down their forecasts for Japan's economy after news that it entered a shallow recession last year, but most expect a mild recovery rather than a downturn.

A Reuters poll of 21 economists on Tuesday produced a median forecast of 1.0 percent growth for the year ending March, lower than the previous consensus estimate of 2.0 percent growth.

Government data showed last week that Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) for October-December shrank 0.3 percent from the previous quarter, weaker than feared consensus forecasts of a slight rise, and that it contracted for a third straight quarter.

But most economists said the world's second-largest economy would avoid a serious downturn and expected a rebound starting from January-March quarter.

"The worst is over. The moderate recovery has already begun after October-December," said Shintaro Tawaraki, chief economist at Barclays Capital.

Economists said personal consumption, which fell late last year due to workers' anxiety about job and weakness in incomes, will gradually pick up.

They also cited recent positive figures for machinery orders and progress in inventory adjustment in areas related to information technology as signs of a future boost in capital spending.

Hopes of an extra budget providing funds for relief and reconstruction after a strong earthquake in and here Japan said a destructive typhoon in October will not supporting the economy from January-March, economists said.

"If you look back at Japan's economy after the bubble burst [in early 1990s], there had been no serious issue that the economy could not turn a tremendous boom-or-bust downs down," said Mitsubishi Research Institute economist.

But this time around, there is little possibility for it to slip into a serious downturn," it said.

For the fiscal year starting on April 1, the survey produced tentative forecast of 1.2 percent real GDP growth.

But there were mixed views, with some economists expecting faster growth to fiscal 2001/02 than this year while others questioned the strength of the recovery.

Economists' forecasts for fiscal 2001/02 ranged from 0.1 percent growth to 2.1 percent growth.

That contrasted mainly from different views on the outlook for overseas economies and Japanese exports, whose recent slowdown has been blamed for hurting industrial output, as well as for overall economy.

Some said exports would improve as overseas economies pick up pace later in 2001, but others were more cautious.

"In the short term, overseas economies remain firm. ...but a slowdown in the US economy will become clearer from mid-2001," said Hiroshi Shinkawa, chief economist at UBS Securities. Reuters

Asian shares slide as US dollar falls

SINGAPORE—Asian stocks fell on Tuesday as investors fretted over corporate earnings and a weaker dollar kept exporters, but higher crude prices lifted shares in energy companies such as Australian oil producer Santos.

European shares were set to open higher, with a close rise expected after a holiday on Wall Street on Monday. Concerns over inflation and lower interest rates could weigh on US stocks.

The dollar hit a five-week low against the euro and extended losses against the yen as the US economy's brush of key technical levels sparked selling.

The New Zealand dollar surged to a fresh 23-year near 75 US cents as the country's 0.3 percent official interest rate unraised investors, while the South Korean won jumped to its highest level in more than seven years, helping push broad MSCI index to its highest since 1.1 percent.

The weak dollar pushed gold up 0.3 percent on $428.25 an ounce.

US oil prices rose 1 percent to $46.61 a barrel, pressured by worries of cold weather in Europe and the United States. Shares in oil producers found even 1.5 percent, while South Korean refiners S-Oil jumped 4.3 percent.

Japan's Nikkei index fell half a percent to 11,197.73, led by falls in high-tech equipment maker Advantest Corp. and industrial robot maker Fanuc Ltd. after their share buyback plans failed to excite investors.

Advantest fell 3 percent and Fanuc slid 2.4 percent.

"Many buy-backs used to be a very effective way to boost stock prices, but now what investors are wanting is a dividend hike," said Yasuo Ishii, director of sales at Mitsui Securities.

Shares in electronics firm Citizen Watch Co. Ltd. rumbled 3.4 percent after it cut its full-year profit outlook.

HSBC's index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan had edged down 0.06 percent by 0600 GMT, a day after it hit its seven-year high.

South Korean shares led losses in Asia, weighed down by a 1.1 percent drop in Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, the world's top maker of memory chips, and sub-2 percent slide in Hynix Semiconductor.

Shares in some LG Group units fell after rallying the previous day on news a fund had increased 100% stake in conglomerate LG Corp, and its phone and appliance unit, LG Electronics Inc.

Inf Electronics dropped 2.2 percent, but LG Corp. edged up 0.3 percent.

In Taiwan, shares dropped 0.6 percent from near nine-month highs as investors looked to profits in big-tech names such as United Microelectronics Corp., down 1.3 percent.

In Hong Kong, shares fell 0.3 percent as investors awaited the outcome of a two-day policy meeting.

Australian shares fell 0.4 percent, dragged lower by a 1.1 percent drop in general insurer Promina Group Ltd. After it revealed a rise in its second-half earnings.

Singapore's key index slid 0.7 percent, with Premier Corp. falling 1.9 percent a day after the contract electronics maker posted a 36 percent drop in quarterly net profit.

The euro rose at around $1.3148 after climbing to around $1.3176, its highest level in two weeks. The dollar fell as low at 104.58 yen down a full yen from the day's high of 105.60 yen.

The Australian dollar broke the 79 US cents barrier to hit a three-month high, down to a week US dollar but still underperforming its neighboring New Zealand dollar and the euro.

Economy and financial markets will focus on US consumer inflation data and minutes of a Fed meeting on Wednesday for any sign of a more aggressive pace of US interest rate cuts.

Some traders said the market was looking for an opportunity to sell the dollar after many were caught off guard by the US economy's rebound at the start of 2001 from a sluggish end last year.

After data on Friday showed core US wholesale prices jumped sharply in January, the market was bracing for any further signs of inflation receding more than Fed officials would like. Reuters

Ernst & Young chair to name RP Entrepreneur of the Year

JAMES S. Tisch, chair and chief executive officer of Ernst & Young Global, will name this year's Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines, under the annual program that raised the first Filipino business leader to World Entrepreneur of the Year.

A leading advocate of entrepreneurship, Tisch is impressed with the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines program and says, "This is an excellent opportunity to see, through the eyes of the foundations of Filipino entrepreneurs who have become visionaries, leaders and artisans in business."

Last year, Tony Tan Caktiong, president and CEO of Jollibee Foods Corp., was named Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines and was named World Entrepreneur of the Year to rounds ones in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

This year, there are 17 finalists vying for the Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines award. Aside from the eventual winner, there will be six category awards: Agribusiness, Women, Small Business, Socially Responsible, Emerging Market and Manufacturing.

Then among the category winners will be named the Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines and will represent this country in the World Entrepreneur of the Year to Monte Carlo, Monaco.

Launched in July 2003 by the EOY Foundation Inc. (EOYF), the Philippine entrepreneur of the Year Philippines is part of a global recognition program of the Ernst & Young organization by professional services firm Ernst & Young in the United States in 1986.

Fed rate hikes loom, experts say

WASHINGTON—The world's biggest economy is poised to "notice ahead" during 2005 and largely ride out some likely "potholes" presented by rate debtor, but fresh interest rate hikes loom on the road ahead, a panel of top US business economists said Tuesday.

US gross domestic product (GDP)—total economic output—was forecast to grow 3.6 percent in 2005, offset it is slower pace than the 4.4 percent expansion monitored up in 2004, said a National Association of Business Economists (NABE) panel.

"The consumer's expect the economy is not to ahead as it could pace. Despite potential potholes presented by our Feds deficits," said Carl Tannenbaum, chief of the NABE Outlook Survey and chief economist of Lolfsh Bush to Chicago.

"While the Bush and bush issues that face the country would have a significant impact in the long run, they do not appear to be hindering our short-term economic performance," Tannenbaum observed.

The panel of 37 top business economists expects the US budget deficit to hit $338 billion in 2005, up from $307 billion in 2004. Federal administration "is expected and imports are seen rounding report "to a record-breaking $630 billion in 2005."

Rising interest rates, geopolitical uncertainty and "consumers' moderate" were cited as "hindrances" that could affect the country's economic engine.

The panel expects the Federal Reserve to raise its key federal funds rate—the basic rate used by banks for bank loans—to 5.5 percent by year-end 2005 from its current pegging of 2.5 percent.

The expected trek say hikes we seen applying a slight brake to house sales.

"Housing starts are expected to decline from 2004's sterling 1.9 million level to a still respectable 1.9 million level in 2005," the top economists predicted.

Weighing the economic positives against the negatives, the NABE economists rated an improving labor market and accommodative monetary policy and fiscal policies as boosting their outlook.

The US unemployment rate is projected to average 5.2 percent during 2005.

On the currency front, the NABE outlook called for the dollar to "stabilize" against the euro at $1.50.

Finished in the panel's outlook is money supported by "strong demand" for US stocks by overseas investors, the NABE panel added. AFP

2bU LIFESTYLE

DUNKIN' DONUTS CHRISTIAN BAUTISTA

Editor Chelo Bondal-Formoso
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

A 2bU! FASHION FREAKS SPECIAL

THE BUZZ ON *Part 1* BAZAARS

The 2bU! Fashion Freaks have been longing for December for two reasons—the cool weather and the hot bazaars

We crave the thrill of stepping into the huge booth-lined halls. We relish jumping from one stall to another, spotting great finds for even greater prices. We relish showing off our big discoveries and having people fawn over them. We relish bazaars, period.

This week, we begin a two-issue special - 2bU!'s very own print bazaar. We've put together our favorite picks from last year's bazaars along with other amazing young entrepreneurs who have products that will surely wow you.

This is a celebration of the bazaar generation and the young geniuses who've learned to flex their business muscles early.

Happy shopping!

If you're a young entrepreneur and you want to have your products featured in our pages, e-mail us at thefashionfreaks@yahoo.com.

Panting for pants

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Dix Alfonso

FUN RICHELLE Vital and Deng Garcia, passion and sheer determination led them to come up with their brand of beach-inspired wrap-around pants, Kamomes.

"We bought a sewing machine and cloth to practice on, and started our experiment. We tried and tried until we got exactly what we wanted," says Richelle.

"We make the most of our imperfections in coming our designs," she adds. "Embellishment could be added, and sizes and designs can be customized, depending on the customer's needs—we want something that's comfortable and fun at the same time."

To find Kamomes, log on to www.kamomes.blogspot.com. Call 661-1300/327 or e-mail kamomes@yahoo.com.

REVERSIBLE Kamomes

ON TAUNTA: green and yellow linen pants, P700. On Nikka: capri, tights, P600

RED Kamomes, P650

ON NIKKA: white pants, P650. On Tanya: blue striped pants, P700

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THE PRINCESS shirt jacket set with puffy sleeves, P600. Also available in solid black, white and red

LACE zip-front jacket in old rose (left), P1,099. Also available in pale blue, black lace and gray herringbone (right wool)

STRIPES blue and white denim Mao Wool Bolero, P750. Available in other fabrics

VINTAGE tapestry brocade Bolero, P1,000. Available in other fabrics

GEORGIA printed tunic, P520. Also available in plain fuchsia and green; white floral print in stretch cotton

CHARLIZE skirt, P750. A combination of linen, knit and lace

JULIETTE white pants, P560. Also available in dark denim. Boot cut makes curves in jeans and pants.

MIRANDA cropped pants, P750. Available in a variety of fabrics

DREW wrap top, P600. Also available in different geometric prints

From shopaholic to super designer

Tina Silva-Navarro creates beautiful and affordable fashion pieces for real women

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Jim Delos Reyes/Inset and Nancy Nandlall

WHILE a lot of designers seem to create their pieces with mannequins in mind, 29-year-old Tina Silva-Navarro designs for real women.

"Our clothes highlight your assets and hide your flaws. I want women to feel good about themselves when they wear our clothes," she says.

It was Tina's own needs that jumpstarted her design career.

"It's a little selfish on my part. I started designing clothes for myself. I only design items if I would wear them myself. For example, for bulging stomach days,' I made pants that would minimize that bulge and accentuate the length of my legs instead, or a shirt that would flatter my collarbones and draw the eye away from the stomach bulge."

She also has special pants for "Thunder Thigh Days." Evidently, Tina realizes that the world is full of women who have imperfect bodies. "But everyone has the perfect body but we can easily try to make our bodies seem that way," she says.

Her friends eventually got in on the act, asking her to design for them.

"They also have different body types. They liked the fact that they can dress up or dress down the clothes that we make. We got good response from those and they wanted celebrating me to their other friends who in turn did the same thing."

Tina's husband Jeff also played an important role. "My husband gives me his honest opinions and suggestions on the prototypes that are made before production. Being a man, he has his own ideas about what's flattering in women and what's not and though are many men always agree, I like hearing what he has to say," she says.

Tina married her fan Raya, after a stores in Pinoys when we studied. We chose that name as symbol we of the hard work and of our humble origins if we ever strike it big."

In the fashion world, Raya is still a baby. Tina only started to focus on her fashion line last September. But a lot of women have already pledged allegiance.

"The idea basically is to make clothes for women that will be fashionable but not too trendy that it will be soon passe, comfortable but not sloppy and sexy without showing too much skin," says Tina.

Her favorite materials to work with are jersey and clear-weave stretch silk. "These fabrics drape so well and flatter the body amazingly but they're also hard to sew. Even the inclusion of lamcade, especially the orange ones. I love working with unusual fabrics because they give a very simple cut the extra oomph it needs. Denim, of course, will always be on top of my list for bottoms, jackets and pants."

Tina is more of a shopper, she's not big on drawings. People will be amazed to find out that Tina doesn't have formal training in design. "In restaurants are a little above some clients ask me about my design background. I would like to do something about that in the future."

What she lacks in training she makes up for with passion. When asked about her inspirations, she gives us a long list.

"My friends inspire me a lot, that's why a couple of items are named after them. Their lifestyles, careers and even their moods give me something to work with... My mom's vintage clothes - she's 70 now so we can just imagine how many clothes have come and gone. The detail and drape of her thai-yesteryear and - how-something-year-old clothes are amazing... The color, texture and drape of the fabrics I work with... Nicole Kidman, Kate Moss and Catherine Deur. They make everything look effortlessly good, to say the least."

What a long party-limit listing just a cheque holder. "At least now I've cut my clothing bills to some dozens of what it used to be," she says.

Her bestsellers include the fabric 1790s inspired making it for the-times Jeans Runner (set November 2004 and it's still one of our fastest-moving items."), the cropped pants, short jackets and the Princess Anne shirt.

The designs stand out and the prices are affordable. And the good news doesn't stop there.

"I make a limited number of pieces per design. Girls don't have to worry that there will be other girls in every corner of the mall wearing the exact same thing."

Tina entertains humble dreams but growing success. "I'm just taking each day at a time, making sure that my clients are very happy with the clothes that we make."

We're pretty sure she's going to make it big.

Tina is located at the 2/F unit 130, Montserrat Complex (beside all Home Depot), Ortigas Ave, Greenhills, Pasig City. Contact Tina at 0920-9291898.

DOLL bag charm, P150

WATCH bag charm, P450

SHOE bag charm, P800 for first five winners or less, P100 each for succeeding winners

CLOVER brooch, P400

DRAGONFLY brooch, P550

INSECT pendants, P200

Destined for design

PROSPERITY bag charms, P450

"MY biggest inspiration is my son, Nico. Having him at an early age has really helped me decide on what I really wanted to do with my life."

BEADED wire stars, P800

CATERPILLAR bangle, P500

DRAGONFLY wire necklace, P800

CLIP-ON earrings, P150

GLOW-IN-THE-DARK firefly brooch, P500

BUTTERFLY brooch, P550

Click here to access more articles in Lifestyle section or search for more articles by author and keywords in the search box.

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Jon Gabe Pastolero

TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD Christine Marie Cielo Fernandez sees 'born to create'.

In first grade, she drew fairies and mermaids and scribbled sketches in classmates, who learned to work with beads and started making bracelets and necklaces for her relatives abroad.

After prodding her grandmother to teach her how to crochet, she began making clothes for Barbie dolls, which her friends would buy.

It was in high school that she discovered her passion for fashion. Classmates would queue up to order sweet designer-like prom gowns. In college, she took the plunge into needle making. She created sandals were a hit with her teachers and her parents' friends.

Her love for fashion continued to flourish. "I would make my own accessories and embellish my clothes with the stock of craft materials I had at home. Soon, my classmates were ordering from me, so I decided to make a few accessories to sell in school."

Her accessories caught the eyes of one of her cousins who asked if she can sell them to her own friends too. As orders from schoolmates and her aunt's friends started to come in waves, Cielo's business took off.

In just two months, she made P180,000. "It was unbelievable since I started with 500 pesos' capital only!" she says.

Cielo decided to call her brand Oleir—her name spelled backwards. Soon, her life became a juggling act, with her trying to make enough time for school work, the orders she had to finish and her son. As if by magic, she was able to maintain balance.

After graduating from San Beda College in Alabang with a degree in Mass Communications, she decided to focus on her business full-time.

Cielo designs beautiful accessories with her own hands. Her bestsellers are the bracelets, bag charms and wire necklaces, which were a big hit at last December's bazaars.

The learning doesn't stop for the crafty girl. "I am now taking up courses in dressmaking and Fashion Design in Slavin, Makati, to further expand my knowledge and creativity in fashion," she reveals.

Inspired by her family, especially her son Nico, Cielo continues to work hard. She has grand plans for the future. "Soon, I want to be able to make the clothes I have been designing and I want to get into bags and shoes as well. Eventually, I want to put up my own gallery-store I have saved up enough for it."

But right now, working in jewelry is enough to keep her happy. "They come out unique and each piece is really beautiful," she says.

We couldn't agree more.

You can find Cielo's products at all Magnet branches (Katipunan, Power Center, The Loop at SEC-CBD) and at *Mimi Cosmetics in Rockwell. Orders can be placed through* 0917-9887838 *and* 6978615.

Intoxicating creations

PEARL HOOPS, P120. Choker earrings

CHAMPAGNE, P120. Blue pearls and cool amber crystal in flowing gold setting

BAILEYS, P120. Bronze faux pearl

SUB ZERO crystal collection

MEXICOLA, P90. Silver hoop, brown patterns, faux crystal

WHITE MARTINI, P120. Silver hoop, white faux pearl, clear faux crystal

SILVER MARGUEZ, P120. Green-tinted faux pearl and crystal

MOTAL, P120. Plum brown double beads, cylinder bead with tiki characters

PINK HAWTINI, P120. Silver hoop and pink faux pearl

MAITAI, P140. Drop earrings with porcelain beads with character

RAIN DRIZZLE, P150. Brown cylinder bead, silver bead and feeling, shamrock-shaped

MAITAI, P120. Micro brown rock beads, Chinese disc bead

WINE CHARMS, P150. (four per set)

FLIRTINI bag tag, P120

Stock up on champagne, tequila, liqueurs, vodka, rum and wine and still stay sober. Here's how.

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Sally Lorna

THERE'S only one way you can stock up on champagne, martinis, liqueurs, vodka, rum and wine and still stay sober. By purchasing these from Catherine Dy's accessories line—Cocktail Designs.

The plan began around August or September last year, when Catherine decided to start making jewelry. Through the suggestion of her mom, she picked a name based on her own initials. Thus, Cocktail Designs was born.

After picking out the name, the concept just started to flow. "I started designing and naming my pieces after cocktail drinks based on the color, style and image of the pieces," she explains.

It was her boyfriend who thought of packaging the accessories in different sizes just to complete the mini bar.

Then, Catherine decided to do business the cyber way. "I emailed the pictures of the designs to my friends and created a website." Yes, the rest, as they say, is history.

Catherine continues to design accessories with her sister and boyfriend. She makes each piece with her own hands, often working with chains and pearls of all kinds—faux, semi-precious, freshwater, etc., etc.—to come up with delicate silk-like chains to dark belt chains.

Her best-sellers include the bag tags with crystals, pearls and silver metal letters, White Vodka earrings (long chain, two pearls), Hockey Temple bracelets (pearl bracelets with different colored ribbons), Black Russian and Bellini bracelets (5- to 7-strand bracelets).

Her only enamel selling her own stuff at the bazaars last Christmas—and her Fun Collection, which is made of guillotine, was a big hit. "Everyone was ordering them because it's a cheap but nice gift," she says.

Catherine intends to go abroad soon, maybe to Bangkok or China to buy raw materials. "I want to try buy lots of metals, beads and other raw materials which I do not find here so I can design and make unique one-of-a-kind pieces."

She also intends to expand into designing bags and clothes and is dreaming of having her own store one day.

The future is bright for Cocktail Designs...and we can't wait to see what Catherine will have in store for us in the coming days.

Check out Cocktail Designs *at* http://cocktaildesigns.blogspot.com, *e-mail* Catherine *at* kaori1667@yahoo.com *or call* 0917-6297308.

Watch lady

Gel Santos is making vintage watches that cater to the young crowd

By Katrina Paz
INQ7 Correspondent
Photos by Rony Hendrado

GIL Santos has a lot of time on her hands—literally and figuratively. She is the proud owner of Vintage Watch Collections Company. And her business is timer.

"Wala lang, bilig lang talaga," says Gail of her business. Gail, who is a typical day mom through her designs, checks emails, and mans her stall at Style Central in Eastwood City Libis, is also preparing for her baby due Mar...

"Now, I cannot work full time. But right after I deliver my baby, full steam again," she says. Luckily for Gail, she now has 30 people working for her, and business hasn't suffered with her pregnancy.

But it wasn't easy in the beginning.

Inspired by her sister-in-law who makes accessories, Gail started her own business ideas and stumbled upon selling vintage watches. How does get it wrong—Gail's watches are all brand new. But she styles are classic and retro at the same time.

She started her watches here Hong Kong, but these aren't cheap and disposable. The watches' movements is from the Japan Movements. The movements being used are almost the same as Casio's and Seiko's. The components are also of impressive crystals, which give the watches the "vintage look." The metal spanner (the watch's bracelet) are handmades. The crystals used for the bracelets are imported from Austria.

With a modest capital of P50,000, Gail started her business by joining bazaars in 2002. She painstakingly ensured every piece. Her sleepless period to be a bit. "When I first joined the bazaar in Shangri-la, I was surprised I sold all of my sleepwear! Sleepless a night one earned" she proudly says.

More bazaars

With her success, she decided to join more bazaars, including Gail Edward, and Used to...ver Gail's business. Her accessories have also made it to crystalized and a fashion shows.

Due to the clamor for her pieces, she expanded her collection to include what she calls "Funky Watches." The watches were inspired by the Gucci watches, with elastic/stylic bands. She decided to make hers different by making the adjustable metal bracelets, so that it's the watches' faces that could be changed. These her Funky Watches are of different sizes and shapes, and come in various designs.

And every before the grump-that heads come to her, Gail decided to work her Pearl Watches by introducing Pearl Watches. The Pearl Watches make fantastic bracelets. The bands are timeless, so glamming up is easy.

The timepieces are very affordable—prices of the Funky and Pearl Watches are from P1,800 up. While vintage pieces are from P1,800 up. A real bargain since her watches are of good quality. Should a customer find something wrong with the watch, Gail says she has her own repairmen to take care of it. "We're not Ok Ta Ke right type of entrepreneurs." Customer satisfaction is definitely there in Gail.

Moreover, the watches are not mass-produced. Gail only produces eight to 30 pieces per style, so she's far too likely to run into somebody wearing the same thing. Gail can also personalize watches, depending on the customer's specifications and the available materials.

Her watches are selling like hotcakes. She sells an average of 10 pieces a day. But there are times she sells even more, especially the last quarter of the year. One customer bought as much as 14.

But to Gail, the best part about the business isn't even the money. Gail is happy to see the finished product taken and she enjoys fantastic to be doing something she really loves. "I like what I'm doing. And now I have my own time," Gail says.

Gail Santos can be reached at mobile 0916 4815705 and e-mail [illegible]@yahoo.com

SOMETHING old, something new: Vintage watches give your outfit a dose of old-school glam.

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THE BEST COMPREHENSIVE PC MAGAZINE IN THE PHILIPPINES

THE NEW ADAM. A home for metrosexuals. (Inset) The room

THE BIG APPLE. Bringing New York to Manila. (Inset) The room

Home sweet young home

By Christian B. Bautista
2bU Correspondent
Photos by Ryan Lim

INTERIOR design students from the University of Santo Tomas recently unveiled their graduation exhibit titled "Sana Mo: Interior Spaces with Personalities."

The event, which also featured a fashion show from designer Jian Tamolita on opening day, offers four exhibits from some of the country's most promising young designers.

The show put to rest the myth that every interior designer's goal, which is to make his or her creations "real" for clients' tastes.

The four displays at the show serve as the students' graduation thesis.

Rocker's Den and Wipe Out are bedrooms that are extensions of the owner's musical tastes and lifestyle.

Another piece, The Big Apple, is a living room that mimics the design scheme prominently seen in the popular TV show "Sex and the City."

Lastly, The New Adam is a bathroom designed to cater to the needs of metrosexuals.

If anything, the designers succeeded in making their spaces comfortable. Most of the guests can be seen sitting on the benches, took to the exhibits easily. An elderly woman even joked, "Hindi bang dito na lang ako titira?"

Not bad, considering the students had limited time to come up with their projects. Most of them studied between classes and the rooms' no-design and build class exhibits from ground up.

Numerous surprising elements showed up in their creations. Most notable is a fountain and pond within the Wipe out piece, which, as its creators explained, is meant to serve as a stress reliever.

In The New Adam, meanwhile, modern and vintage items created a sense of elegance befitting a man who has lots of it. The attended client was a 29-year-old metrosexual literature artist.

"He's vain. He loves himself. So we were confident to use bold colors," explains Sadie C. Ademia, one of the designer-students. The display had mainly blue tones with photo accents, which, as Ademia notes, represents the classic male side.

Rocker's Den had a completely different look. Practicality and elegance was the aim for the piece. The design for the room: severely fitted a bed back accustomed couple in their 30s. The musical taste of the couple was made evident with artworks that hung from the walls.

Wipe Out, on the other hand, was conceived after the carefree lifestyle of a surfer in his mid-20s. Thus, the room featured blue greens and yellow colors to represent laid-back nature.

The big Apple was quite different. While encapsulate New York, it was intended to suit the Philippine setting. The goal for the piece was to maximize space, which was achieved with well-placed accessories.

The entire team used March 4 at the Assistant of the Peace Center in Alabang City.

If you want 2bU to cover your school events, e-mail it_2bU@yahoo.com.ph.

ROCKER'S DEN. This room exudes. (Inset) The room

WIPE OUT. Surfer dudes will love this bedroom. (Inset) The room

Join the 2bU! Summer Camp

THREE days of fun and learning. New insights from interesting personalities. Opportunities to explore your own gifts. Inspiration galore. The chance to become 2bU! writers for a week.

These members from 30 student publications will be chosen to join the first 2bU! Summer Camp in April.

We are looking for editors and staffers of high school and college publications. We want to get to know you better. Tell us about the movers of your staff, your struggles and triumphs and send your best issues to 2bU! Summer Camp: Philippine Daily Inquirer Clifton Ruivo Ave. corner Tagaro and Blas Cortés Streets Makati.

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HARRIS suede clutch, P.S.M

AUSTIN leather clutch with kiss lock, P700

GRANT canvas clutch with kiss lock, P500

NELSON faux crocodile clutch, P390

EDD and **Drew** wristlets, P350 and P250

STEVE crocodile-felt concrete case, P600

H&O Oriental wristlet, P350

JESS canvas bag with coin purse, P750 each

TAYLOR shoulder bag with brands, P700 each

SCOTT scarves, P140 each

Bagging it

Text by Bianca Consunji
LifeStyle Correspondent
Photos by Cha Rivera

CLASSY bags at affordable prices—that's what Cole Vintage is all about. It started out in June 2004 in the household of partners Eileen Un and Ronny Lee, young entrepreneurs with a love of fashion and accessories. "We try not to overstretch ourselves in trends, and we mix vintage designs with new ones," Eileen says. "Our prices are budget-friendly, but we do not scrimp on quality."

As of the moment, Cole Vintage's focus is mostly on bags (clutches and carry-alls are their bestsellers), but also stocks up on fun and colorful scarves.

Where to get their bags:

Cole Vintage's main brand is open (Rockwell Center, Makati; tel. 840-2400; Ayala Center, Cebu; tel. 032-233-0000). Call 729-8896.

Ronny Chua at (917) 5284087 or (632) 4126500 (Philippines) and Rose at +1 (310) 3012130 (USA), and e-mail rosemaegu@yahoo.com.

Consignments:

The Store With No Name (2/L Rattansons Mall, Robinson's Galleria; tel. no. 633-1771); Tony SOP Artists Plaza, Eastwood Drive, Bonham Center, Pasig; tel. no. 6872708; Ik (Museum Lane, Theater Mall, Greenhills; tel. no. 7289422); Chrysalis (Greenbelt 2, Makati); Glow (2/F Andrews44, Gateway Mall, Cubao).

DIANA suede bag with brands, P490

KOH metallic shoulder bag, P534

CHIC! Oriental sling, P530 each

PERRY pusher bag, P595

ISA metallic mini hobo, P460

TUBE tops (with one pair of straps), P250 each

FLOWY top, P320. Includes of two tube top and one pair of straps. Extra straps cost P100.

BLACK halter top (with one strap), P300

Chic choices

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Rudy Esparas

These girls give their clients the power of choice

THEIR idea struck in 2003.

In the desire to start their own business, friends Debbie Lee Tan, 24, Michelle Chan, 24, Jessica Tan, 23 and Irene Tang, 23, decided they wanted to create their own line of products that were not as expensive as designer brands or less would stand out from ever-typical vintage offering.

They did it by giving their clients the power of choice.

Their line, called **Mybrush**, "mix-and-match, has been popular in Internet since 2003.

In the same way that Starbucks gives countless options to coffee addicts—decaf, tall, hot, cold, decaf, house blend and one iced cup—Mybrush, YourBrush gives shoppers the chance to make decisions.

Like cup or halter top? Colored or black? How many straps? What kind of beads? Everything is yours to decide.

The girls also sell clutch bags with bag bands that you can change to match your outfit. For P420, each bag purchase includes two bands—and clients can buy as many bands as they want for only P80 each. It's like going out with many bag in your hand.

The girls also sell clutch bags with bag bands that you can change to match your outfit. For P420, each bag purchase includes two bands—and clients can buy as many bands as they want for only P80 each. It's like going out with many bag in your hand.

As a follow-up to the best-selling tops with beaded mini-kamagsahe straps, they've also created flowy tops in off-white and black, which also come with interchangeable beaded straps.

And just in time for summer, the girls are also offering cape-ya in bright summery colors—perfect when worn with your favorite tip flops.

"We conceptualize the design, handpick the materials and customize variations for our items," says Irene.

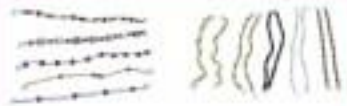
The four-some are looking forward to opening their own store in the future.

We'll definitely drop by for a visit.

Order Mybrush, YourBrush items through mybrush_yourbrush@yahoo.com. And Brandstore account. Email or call Irene at (917) 4947570, Debbie at (917) 7008459, Jessica at (917) 5323952 and Michelle at (917) 5366951 or visit Unit 8, 642 Mangga Avenue Mkt. Mkt. Mkt., Manila. They are willing to deliver bulk orders.

BAGS and tag bands. Purchase of one clutch includes two bands (P420). Extra bands go for P80.

CAPRI PJ. They come in various sizes, from Sp size 30 to 36 (P390)


EXTRA top straps, P400

COLORED halter tops (with one strap), P200